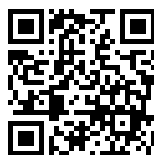

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THE QUEEN'S SERVICE.



By
Horace Wyndham

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The Queen's Service

Being the Experiences of a Private
Soldier in the British Infantry
at Home and Abroad

By

Horace Wyndham

Late of the —th Regt.



London
William Heinemann
1899

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BY PERMISSION
TO
RUDYARD KIPLING
THE FRIEND OF SOLDIERS
FROM A SOLDIER

PREFACE

IN submitting the following pages to the critical judgment of the Public, I have to ask forbearance on account of the many and obvious shortcomings of the volume. It should be borne in mind that the Profession of Arms is scarcely conducive to that of the Pen. The contents, too, have, in many instances, been prepared in surroundings unsuitable for their composition. In barracks, and in camp; on the march, and in the tented field; in the train, and on the troopship; in the United Kingdom, and in British Garrisons in foreign climes, have I, from time to time, and as opportunity afforded, set down the rough notes from which the following chapters have been transcribed.

Throughout the volume it has been my intention to give the General Public—whose interest in everything appertaining to the Army is wide and sincere—some authentic information regarding the life and conditions of service of Non-commissioned officers and Private soldiers.

I do not write of deeds of derring-do performed upon the field of battle, the glamour of the lonely bivouac, or the wild excitement of the night-alarm; nor do I dilate upon the glories of the skirmish, or the fierce exultation of the bayonet-charge. Such stirring episodes are safe in the abler hands of the lady "military" novelists, and I

PREFACE

am happily restrained from infringing their province. My purpose, rather, has been merely to treat of the Soldier's life in these piping times of peace.

In the last few months several changes have taken place in Military Administration, and the conditions of service for the rank and file have in many instances been thereby considerably improved. Chief among these have been the abolition of the old "grocery-stoppage" and the introduction of new regulations affecting subsequent service in the Reserve. Nevertheless, the greater portion of the remarks contained in the ensuing pages apply to the life of the soldier of to-day to precisely the same extent as they do to that of the soldier of the period embraced by the years 1890-1897.

In conclusion, I must state that portions of several of the chapters have appeared in the periodical press, and I am indebted to the Editors of *The Graphic*, *Pall Mall Budget*, *Globe*, *United Service Magazine*, *Navy and Army Illustrated*, &c., for their courtesy in allowing me to use these contributions here and there in

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. AT ST. GEORGE'S	I
II. EN ROUTE	12
III. NEW SURROUNDINGS	19
IV. INTERIOR ECONOMY	30
V. ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS	37
VI. FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO	42
VII. ON GUARD	55
VIII. SUNDAY IN BARRACKS	64
IX. CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY	70
X. AT THE CURRAGH	80
XI. ON ESCORT DUTY	87
XII. A MILITARY COURT-MARTIAL	91
XIII. REGIMENTAL INSTITUTIONS.	97
XIV. FIELD TRAINING	105
XV. AT PIGEON-HOUSE FORT	108
XVI. ARMY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL CERTIFICATES	111
XVII. FOREIGN SERVICE	116
XVIII. OUTWARD BOUND	121
XIX. A VOYAGE IN A TROOPSHIP	129
XX. SOLDIERING IN CAPE TOWN	137
XXI. WYNBERG CAMP	145
XXII. PROMOTION: ORDERLY CORPORAL	151

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
XXIII.	A LONG VOYAGE	160
XXIV.	SOLDIERING IN GIBRALTAR	166
XXV.	LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS ON THE ROCK	172
XXVI.	EXCURSIONS INTO SPAIN	176
XXVII.	A TRIP TO TANGIER	184
XXVIII.	ON A TRANSPORT	187
XXIX.	SOLDIERING IN MALTA	192
XXX.	THE SERGEANTS' MESS	200
XXXI.	PEMBROKE CAMP	209
XXXII.	MUSTA MANŒUVRES	218
XXXIII.	IN A MILITARY HOSPITAL	223
XXXIV.	A MILITARY FUNERAL	232
XXXV.	CRIME AND PUNISHMENT	236
XXXVI.	GENTLEMEN RANKERS	246
XXXVII.	DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?	254
XXXVIII.	MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY	264
XXXIX.	A REGIMENT OF GENTLEMEN	277
XL.	THE TIME-EXPIRED MEN	282
XLI.	A FEW SUGGESTIONS	288

THE GENERAL ADVANTAGES OF THE ARMY

"In addition to money wages, a soldier receives a ration of bread and meat, lodging, fuel and light, and medical attendance for himself, and, if married, for his family, and, on first joining the Army, is supplied with a complete outfit of clothing, and a free kit, containing such necessities as brushes, combs, razors, &c.; and he is afterwards supplied periodically with the principal articles of his clothing, without charge. He is required to keep up his under-clothing and necessities at his own cost, and to pay for repairs to his clothing while in wear, and for his groceries, vegetables, and washing, but not his bedding."

October 1, 1890

**"For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the soldier's prize,
The soldier's wealth is honour,
The brave poor soldier ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger,
Remember he's his Country's stay,
In day and hour of danger!"**

ROBERT BURNS

CHAPTER I

AT ST. GEORGE'S

It was on a dull foggy day in October, in the year of grace 1890, that I commenced my military career at the bottom of the ladder, by the simple process of enlisting. Concerning the circumstances that led to my taking this step, nothing need here be said. Suffice it to remark that having made up my mind to enter the Service through the ranks, I found myself on the morning in question in the vicinity of the chief London recruiting-office. This is better known, perhaps, as St. George's Barracks, and is situated in Orange Street, Trafalgar Square.

Standing just outside the gates, and trying to conjure up sufficient hardiness to demand admittance, I was suddenly startled by a voice exclaiming, "Thinking of enlisting, sir? If so, better come along o' me."

On turning round to see my questioner, I saw at my side a short red-faced man, dressed in a nondescript sort of uniform consisting of a dark cloth "frock," blue trousers adorned with a thin red stripe, and a peaked cap round the brim of which ran a narrow band of somewhat faded gold lace.

"Beg pardon, sir, you were thinking of enlisting, perhaps?" he remarked, insinuatingly.

I admitted the impeachment. Indeed, it was with the express intention of participating in "The General Advantages of the Army" that I had just been studying the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

placards which, on the adjacent railings, set forth in every variety of type and colour the benefits accruing to those who embrace a military career. Those who, like myself, have paused to examine these posters cannot fail to have been impressed with the munificence of the offers therein contained. From a diligent perusal thereof, it appeared to me that a life of cultured ease, and even luxury, was waiting for any one who should choose to apply for them. No previous experience, even, seemed to be necessary, and the substantial advantages of a "free kit, medical attendance, education, rations, fuel, light, lodging, clothing, and pay varying from one to five shillings per diem," were here offered broadcast to the veriest tyro and the veteran of county militias alike.

I was not going to be caught too easily, though, and accordingly suggested the propriety of an adjournment for a little preparatory conversation and refreshment. My newly-found friend, Sergeant Gibson, as he declared his name and title to be, announced himself perfectly agreeable to this proposition. Accordingly, under his direction, we repaired to a neighbouring hostelry where in the privacy of an upstairs room, over a couple of whiskies and sodas, the veteran discoursed for my benefit on military matters. Under the cheering influence of his spirituous refreshment he waxed communicative, and in the course of an hour's conversation I picked up many useful hints and learned a great deal that was to prove invaluable to me in after days. The Sergeant was full of anecdotes of the Service, and one of them, in which he had played a conspicuous part, ran something like this :

One afternoon in December two young men came sheepishly into the barrack-square. That they were regular country bumpkins was patent at a glance. A smart Sergeant of Hussars, spotting them as likely subjects for that branch of Her Majesty's Service which he himself adorned, hastened up, and accosted them.

"Well, my lads! You'd like to join the Army, I dare say. How would you like to come into my regiment, wear

AT ST. GEORGE'S

a smart uniform, carry a sword, and have a fine horse to ride? Come, what do you say?"

"That would be proime, wouldn't it, Bill?" eagerly exclaimed the first yokel. "Us'll come, mister."

"That's right, my men! Come along and have a drink with me."

Just at that moment up came Recruiting-sergeant number two, a Gunner, who also had his eye on the men, and likewise on his recruiting fee.

"Hie, you men!" he broke in, "what's that chap there been sayin' to yer? He's been a-kiddin' you, 'e 'as! You're fond of 'osses, I dessay? Well, then, just you come along with me, and you'll 'ave two 'osses each to ride, and when you're tired of riding, why, you can sit on the gun-carriage. What do you think of that, now?"

"Orl roight, Sergeant. That'll suit us, won't it, Bill?"

"Ay, that it will!" replied his companion, apparently dazzled by the thought of the stud of horses waiting for him, and the prospect of wearing a gold braided jacket like the sergeant's. At this point my friend, Sergeant Gibson, arrived on the scene, and, quickly divining the circumstances, exclaimed, "Come, my fine fellows! Don't you believe a word of what these two chaps have been a-telling you! You take my advice, now, and just let me send you into my corps. I've got two vacancies in the regiment, one for Sergeant-major, and one for Quarter-master. You can toss up, between you, which you'll have!"

"I got them two blokes," said old Gibson, with a chuckle. "They're in India, now. They've been six years in the regiment, and they're both privates still."

At this point noticing that as the strong waters disappear he displayed a tendency to become so exceedingly prolix that I had to recall him to those subjects which more intimately concerned myself.

Our conversation therefore turned to the question as to

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

what branch of the Service I had best join. My private inclination was the Cavalry, and I mildly hinted this preference. I was surprised, however, at the vigorous opposition which my views incurred.

"For Gawd's sake, sir!" he burst out, "don't let them talk you over into being a hoss sodger. Of course, I know that the uniform is smart, and the pay pretty good, and all that, but the work is simply killing. You'll be messing about in stables and muck heaps from morning to night, and cleaning saddlery and equipment is cruel work for any one not brought up to it. They're always a bit short of good men for the Cavalry, and when they see a smart, likely-looking young fellow"—I gracefully acknowledged the insinuation—"they're only too glad to get hold of him, and they'll tell him anything. No! my advice is to join the line—there are plenty of good smart regiments for you to choose from—and go to India—that's the place for soldiering. Why, with your education, you'll be a Sergeant in a couple of years!"

He continued in this sanguine strain for some little time, and I finally decided to be guided by him and to submit myself as a candidate for the ranks of the "Loyal and Royal North Blankshire Fusiliers." Accordingly, after I had paid the bill and the Sergeant had exchanged a few pleasantries with the girls behind the bar we directed our steps to St. George's.

Five minutes afterwards, accompanied by my mentor, who now, I observed, stuck to me very closely (as if he were afraid lest I should slip through his fingers at the last moment), we were entering the square, the objects of great interest to a crowd of small boys, who were only prevented from following us any farther by the sentry at the gate.

Our destination was the "receiving-room," as is known the place set apart for the reception of intending recruits. It was here that I made my first acquaintance with my future comrades-in-arms, the majority of whom were at

AT ST. GEORGE'S

the time busily engaged in imbibing martial enthusiasm from pints of porter obtained from the adjoining canteen.

Crossing the threshold, I paused for a moment in the doorway to better observe these embryo warriors. My first impression of their general appearance was not eminently satisfactory.

The room contained between five-and-twenty and thirty men of all ages and descriptions—from the under-sized youth of barely sixteen, trying vainly to pass himself off for the riper maturity of eighteen, to the care-worn man of apparently five-and-thirty, trying equally to convince his hearers that he was at least ten years less.

At first sight it certainly seemed to be, to such a novice as myself, rather a mystery why some of those present, who, on account of their unsuitable age or ill-health, were so obviously unfitted for soldiers, should be here at all. A riper experience, however, has shown me that, in the anxiety to earn their fee, the Recruiting-sergeants are wont to regard as fish practically all who come to their nets, and eagerly jump at almost any one who likes to present himself. There is always a chance of their being accepted, for the vagaries of army doctors are indeed a little strange. For instance, a man rejected as "medically unfit" at one place of enlistment is often easily passed at another. Again, many a man is permitted to join the Service who is actually suffering from disease at the time. Such men enlist simply for the sake of obtaining the medical treatment which their acceptance will entitle them to. When this is the case it is only natural that our military hospitals are always so full.

Most of those present were smoking hard—a particularly evil brand it seemed to me—and those who could do so refreshed themselves at frequent intervals with strong liquor. Every one was talking loudly and interlarding his conversation with strange oaths and novel similes of speech. Dense clouds of villainous smoke rendered it at first difficult to see more than a yard or two across the room. Half-a-dozen members of the Great Unwashed

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

had selected the fireplace as their rallying-point, while others were lounging round a table, on which lay a few extremely dirty and dilapidated copies of some illustrated papers. A smaller group, who appeared to feel more keenly the uncongenial nature of their surroundings, had gathered together in a corner and were talking in subdued tones.

The assemblage was truly one of "all sorts and conditions," and the social kaleidoscope offered vast possibilities to the student of human nature. As I have said, all is fish that comes to the Recruiting-sergeant's net, but it is of many varieties; from the smart and dapper City clerk, down on his luck for the nonce, and the gentleman's son, enlisting with vague ideas of performing feats of valour at the cannon's mouth at the earliest possible date (with the prompt and substantial recognition of the same in the shape of a Commission), to the evil-looking loafer, hailing from the purlieus of Whitechapel, and the ruddy-faced chawbacon, fresh from the plough-tail and reeking of his native stables and manure. Each class was here represented. Not a few of them seemed to be occupied in repenting at their leisure their somewhat undue haste to offer themselves at the shrine of Mars.

Fortunately, we were none of us given too much time for such reflection, for we were speedily hurried on to the next act in the drama. This was the signing of our Attestation Papers.

One by one we were ushered into a little room, where an officer rapidly read over to us the contents of a paper. This, which proved to be the Attestation Sheet, was a formidable-looking document, printed in red type on blue paper. One side of this is occupied by a long list of questions, with spaces in which the answers are to be written. The various queries are of a most searching and decidedly personal nature. Information is required as to the particular branch of the Service which one wishes to join; whether one has ever been in prison; is already married; or if one has at any time previously

AT ST. GEORGE'S

served in the Regular or Auxiliary forces, and has been discharged therefrom with ignominy, or as an invalid? &c. &c.

On the other side is a notice to the effect that the recruit will be required to attend at a duly appointed time, to undergo a medical examination as to his fitness for the Army. An appendix, consisting of some interesting extracts from the *Queen's Regulations* and the *Army Act*, follows. These intimate, to all whom it may concern, that the various pains and penalties which await on conviction any false answers to these questions range from "Death or any less Punishment" to "Confinement to Barracks for a period not exceeding twenty-one days." It struck me that this allowed of a considerable margin for mercy. Various terms of imprisonment, with or without hard labour, may also be incurred on conviction of offences in relation to enlistment.

Altogether, the paragraph seemed to hint pretty strongly that it was more than advisable to answer the questions with a due regard for the truth. However, I emerged from the ordeal pretty well, although the demand for my name and last address rather made me hesitate.

"Now then! let's have your name. What's it going to be? Smith, Brown, Jones, Robinson, White, Green, Black, or what? Make up your mind, and don't be all day about it!" demanded the official.

I selected the patronymic of Robinson, and mendaciously gave my address as Grosvenor Gardens. The officer eyed me peculiarly, and smiled drily as he wrote down these particulars.

"Just as you like—might have said Buckingham Palace while you were about it, though," was all he vouchsafed to remark. "Sign here."

With the affixing of my signature I found that I had certified that "the above questions had been duly read over and explained to me, and that I understood the responsibility of complying with the conditions thereby implied."

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

The next process necessary towards my conversion into a full-blown defender of my country was the undergoing of a medical inspection, after which, if all proved satisfactory, I should be required to take the Oath of Allegiance. This would bind me, in the terms of the "Short Service" system, to serve for seven years "with the colours" and five with the Reserve. If on active service, or abroad, at the expiration of this first period, I would be required to remain another twelve months with the colours. This, however, would be deducted from my subsequent service in the Reserve.

As a preliminary to the doctor's inspection it was announced to us that all aspirants were to be invested with the Order of the Bath. From a little preliminary inquiry on the subject I learned that the ablutionary accommodation at St. George's was so excessively limited that it would be necessary for each bath to do duty for a considerable number of applicants. Moreover, it appeared that, as the authorities did not consider it necessary to permit a fresh supply of water on each occasion, the honour would not be altogether a very pleasant one. Under these circumstances I resolved to decline the distinction. Sergeant Gibson fortunately stood my friend here, and enabled me to have my own way in this little matter.

It was now about eleven o'clock, and as the time for the doctor's visit was at hand, we were all conducted into an adjoining waiting-room, and told to strip to the original garments of our first parents. Acting on a hint given by the Corporal in charge of the room, I handed over to him my small stock of valuables together with my clothing, to look after for me while I waited my turn.

In a few minutes my name was called, and I entered the inspection-room. The medical examination, although of short duration, was fairly severe. I was first of all measured in all directions, my lungs sounded, and my anatomy minutely inspected from head to foot. I was then required to exhibit my powers in the way of hopping

AT ST. GEORGE'S

and jumping round the room. Having been pronounced proficient in these respects, my eyesight was next tested.

This is a point on which they are generally fairly strict in the Service, and with good reason, for a man who cannot see well certainly cannot shoot well. The test lies in correctly estimating the number of dots on a series of cards, held at various distances from the eyes. It is not the easiest thing in the world to do this properly at the first attempt, and many a man fails from nervousness as much as from actual incapacity.

All of us who satisfied the doctor as to our physical capacity to serve were required to undergo one last ceremony before our initiation should be completed. This was the taking of the Oath of Allegiance in the presence of a magistrate.

This incident was performed by those pronounced, like myself, medically fit, in batches of a dozen at a time. When it came to my turn I joined a group ordered to march into the recruiting-office. Here were waiting a Staff officer in charge of the proceedings, and a civilian gentleman, who in his capacity as a magistrate of the county was authorised to swear in recruits. In obedience to his instructions we ranged ourselves round a long table on which lay several tattered and extremely soiled bibles. I gingerly selected the least dirty-looking one visible and held myself in readiness for action.

The terms of the oath were then announced by the magistrate at a speed which betrayed his evident anxiety to go home for his luncheon. So far as I recollect, the administration was made something in this fashion :

“ Now then, stop talking, and pay attention ! ” exclaimed the official sharply.

“ All you men here do make oath that you will be faithful, and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, and that you will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, her heirs and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

successors, and all generals and officers set over you. So help you God! Kiss the book. Go outside and shut the door!"

The kissing of the book, or books, as each man is provided with a separate copy, was not too pleasant an operation, for it must be remembered that they have done duty from time immemorial for generations of recruits. Under these circumstances their condition can best be imagined. In the interests of cleanliness alone some other procedure might, it seemed to me, be more fittingly adopted.

On the whole I considered that I was justified in refraining from performing this portion of the ceremony. Nevertheless, I do not think that my oath was any the less sincere on that account. Some of the men, however, made up for this little discrepancy on my part by kissing their bibles with gusto, invoking at the same time strange deities in aid of their due observance of their vows. My immediate neighbour, for instance, audibly exclaimed "S'elp me Gawd! May I be struck pink if I go back on it!"

With the taking of this oath the rubicon was irrecoverably crossed, and from that moment we became, to all intents and purposes, soldiers of the regular forces. We represented many branches and departments—Houshold Cavalrymen, Hussars, and Dragoons, with Guardsmen, Linesmen, and Highlanders—all had here their representatives. Beside myself, two of the party had elected to become Fusiliers, and, after a few minutes' waiting we were told that we should be sent to join the 1st battalion of the regiment at Dublin, on the following day. Till three o'clock the next afternoon we were at liberty to do as we liked. At this hour, however, we were required to report ourselves to the N.C.O. detailed to conduct us to the Blankshires' head-quarters.

The Corporal, Hobson by name, selected for this duty took the opportunity of informing me that any one absenting himself on this occasion would be treated as a deserter.

AT ST. GEORGE'S

To put him at his ease, I promptly assured him that I had no intention of distinguishing myself in so signal a manner at this early stage of my military career. When he had become convinced on this point we parted the best of friends.

CHAPTER II

EN ROUTE

IN my anxiety lest I should by any chance miss the train, I arrived at St. George's at least an hour before the appointed time on the following afternoon. This period of waiting I spent very profitably in talking to old Gibson.

"I gave you some hints yesterday," he said in parting, "and here's another for you. In the days to come you'll find some rough times before you, that you don't dream of now, and wouldn't understand if I was to speak of 'em. Whatever happens, mind this, and you'll be all right—keep a stiff upper lip and take it as all in the day's work. That's the proper way to soldier! Don't get down in the mouth, and want to chuck it before you've done six months' service. Stick it for all you're worth, and you'll come out on top at the end. And now, here's Corporal Hobson and his two youngsters waiting for you, so good-bye again."

When I had shaken hands with him and turned to go, I felt that I had parted with a true friend. Often in the days to come did his words, spoken on that long distant afternoon, recall themselves to me. A few months ago when I went, on finding myself once more in London, to call on him, I was pained to learn that he had been in his grave for some years.

The Corporal now came up with a couple of weedy-looking youths in tow, who, as fellow-Fusiliers, were with

EN ROUTE

myself to complete the reinforcements to the Dublin garrison. One of these might have reached the dignity of seventeen years of age, but nothing would induce me to believe that the other was a day more than sixteen. Soldiering, however, as some one says, makes strange travelling companions, and I did not care to be too critical just then. All the same, the prospect of walking across London in such company appealed to me so little that I volunteered to be responsible for the necessary cab fare to Euston. Corporal Hobson agreed to this proposal, although he demurred at first to my wasting money which might be put to so much better a use—in the way of providing liquid refreshment, he was good enough to explain. I effectually overcame his scruples by undertaking to attend to this as well.

On the arrival of the mail train we took our seats, and in a few minutes were speeding onwards to our destination. After a brief but unsuccessful attempt to pass the time in reading I lay back in my corner and tried to sleep, but in this I was not any the more successful.

As I had feared my travelling companions did not prove of the most desirable description. They were festively inclined and evidently resolved to make the most of the few hours that yet intervened between themselves and the trammels of military discipline. A succession of stirring songs with remarkably vigorous choruses, and a pack of cards served to while away the hours. At every stoppage they insisted on putting their heads out of the windows and indulging in a little playful badinage with the guards, porters, and passengers on the platform. However, everything comes to an end sooner or later, and at length we reached Holyhead.

It was midnight when we arrived, and there was no time to do more than hurry from the station to the dock, where lay the magnificent saloon steamship *Hibernia*, as she was described in the advertisement. Before I had been many minutes on board I was strongly of opinion that "cattle-boat" would be a more fitting term to apply

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

to her. To put it plainly the *Hibernia* was a sorry old tub, and the "magnificent saloon" was not in evidence at all, owing to its being temporarily occupied by a cargo of pigs destined for the Dublin market.

There was certainly a bar on board, which seemed to be doing a roaring trade, but any privacy in the shape of a cabin to sleep in was impossible to obtain. I soon gave up my search for such a luxury, and, enveloped in a rug with which I had fortunately provided myself, lay down on a deck seat and presently fell fast asleep.

Shortly after seven o'clock the next morning the *Hibernia* was moored alongside the wharf in North Wall Dock. When the cessation of the motion caused by the paddles made this welcome intelligence known to them my travelling companions emerged from the fastnesses where they had hitherto stowed themselves away. Desperately unhappy did these youths appear now, for the foul fiend *mal-de-mer* had evidently gripped them hard. The gallant Corporal, too, had quite lost that air of reckless abandon which had stood him in such good stead on the railway journey.

Some refreshment, which we obtained at the station buffet, soon put new life into our party. Sea-sick or not, my brothers in arms attacked the viands that I had weakly undertaken to pay for with a vigour that astonished me. I began to think that we should never see barracks.

"After we've drunk our gallant friend's very good 'ealth, and wished him suitable luck for 'is generous treatment," remarked Corporal Hobson reflectively, when he had at last finished stoking, "we'd better make a move. Now, you youngsters, don't sit there blowing your bags out any longer, like a couple of blooming young pigs! 'Tchun!"

Learning from our conductor that our destination—Richmond Barracks—was situated some three miles away, I promptly suggested the advisability of driving there. The Corporal concurred, and volunteered the remark that he had thought of making the same proposal himself.

EN ROUTE

However, he did not enlighten me as to whether he had also intended to bear the expense, and on this point I thought it as well not to press him. Accordingly a car was chartered, and we were soon rattling at a fair pace over the cobble stones towards our goal.

Various places of interest *en route* were pointed out to me by our guide.

"That's the Bank," he said, as we passed the famous building ; "you'll probably find yourself doing sentry-go there in a month or so, perhaps."

A few minutes later and we came to the Castle.

"That's another guard," he remarked ; "try and grip No. 2 post the first time you go on."

"Why?" I asked inquiringly.

"Oh, because the orders are easiest to learn there," was the explanation he vouchsafed. Rather wondering what this might mean I mentally resolved to investigate the matter at a more fitting opportunity.

Presently he pointed out Kilmainham Prison, a gloomy-looking building in the Inchicore Road. Here, he informed me, it would be more in accordance with the fitness of things to leave the car and finish the remainder of the short journey on foot.

"You see," he explained, "it doesn't do to put any side on for a start. It's precious few recruits that can drive into barracks. Besides, you'll soon find better use for your money than spending it on car fares."

We entered the barrack-gate, the sentry, as we passed him, coming smartly to the "shoulder."

"Eyes right!" commanded the Corporal in return.

Neither myself nor my two companions understanding how this manœuvre was effected we continued serenely on our way across the square. For myself, I had some doubt as to whether I ought not to raise my hat as a graceful acknowledgment to the other's salutation.

Our conductor, however, had different views on the subject.

"Look here!" he shouted fiercely, "when I gives the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

command *Eyes right*, I wants to see yer 'eads an' eyes turned in the required direction, in accordance with instructions laid down in the manual for Infantry Drill, or else I'll precious soon know the reason why!"

The worthy Corporal's sudden development of this aggressively martinet-like spirit was merely assumed for the benefit of the onlookers, who crowded round us in a quite embarrassing manner. Our immediate destination was the Orderly-room. Here our papers were delivered to a clerk and we were handed over to the Sergeant-major.

"So these are the new recruits, are they, Corporal?" he remarked, eyeing me with evident dissatisfaction.

"Yessir, brought 'em from St. George's last night."

"Humph! it's a dashed pity you didn't lose 'em on the way then," returned the Sergeant-major shortly. "However, they can't be much worse than the last few batches you've got hold of for us lately."

It may not, perhaps, be out of place to here say a few words regarding this functionary. He attains his rank by warrant, and is, therefore, a Warrant officer. Although not, of course, on an equal standing with a Commissioned officer, it is, nevertheless, directed that he be "invariably addressed in the same respectful manner." His authority over the Non-commissioned officers and men is paramount. He details the numbers required for guard and other duties daily, and exercises a strict supervision over the rank and file in general. He marches at the head of the battalion, and on the drill square is the terror of recruits. For these multitudinous duties he is remunerated at the rate of 5s. per diem. The position is seldom attained under fourteen or fifteen years' service, and is usually rewarded after a short period by promotion to the Commissioned ranks as Quarter-master. This post is the blue ribbon of the ranks, and is the highest ambition of every Non-commissioned officer and man.

Our interview with the Sergeant-major, generally referred to, for the sake of brevity, as the S.M., was soon

EN ROUTE

over. After inspecting us critically, he communicated to a friend his impression that "it was a rum world." He did not offer to explain this enigmatical remark, but told us that the Colonel and Adjutant would see us in a few minutes. While we were waiting he gave me some good advice as to the proper sort of bearing to observe in my new surroundings.

"I don't know at all what your ideas may be, Robinson," he said, "but if you happen to think that the Service is all beans and bacon, you're making a mistake that's as big as the bull's-eye on a first-class target. It's a damned hard life at the start, and it rests with yourself if it's to continue so. Another thing: don't make too many friends—they'll be always wanting to borrow your money and smoke your baccy. I hope you're going in for promotion, but don't be disappointed if you're not made Colour-sergeant in a week. You won't get the colours, or anything else, until you're fit for them."

He next proceeded to harangue my two companions.

"Now then, you youngsters! You want to be soldiers, I suppose, and by the grace of God—and punishment drill if necessary—I'll turn you out so. It's like your infernal impudence though, to come into the Fusiliers at all, and I don't know what they can be thinking of at St. George's. Now, bear in mind that you're always to do exactly what you're told, whether you like it or not—you probably won't like it at all, but that won't matter in the least. Keep yourselves clean, and be as smart as Providence will permit you, and you'll get on all right. None of your damned cockney monkey-tricks here, d'ye understand?"

"Yes, mister, that'll be all right," remarked one of them confidentially in response to this exhortation.

"Say *Sir*, you lop-sided caricature of a half-baked militia-man, when you speak to me!" thundered the outraged S.M., "and stand to attention, too, if you know how to."

The terrified youth, Jenkins by name, humbly assured

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

him that "he didn't mean no 'arm," and withdrew in fear and trembling to communicate with his friend Mold.

"You see," observed the S.M. to me under his breath, "I'm bound to shake these fellows up at the start, or else they'll be thinking that they can take all sorts of liberties with their superiors," and then aloud, "Come along now, and go before the Colonel."

Ushered by him into the presence of the Commanding-officer, who was sitting in his office in company with the Adjutant, we made our first acquaintance with these officers.

Colonel Douglas, a tall thin man, with bushy eyebrows and fiercely curled moustache, regarded us fixedly for a few moments, and, after asking us our names, and the trade or calling in which we had last been engaged, expressed a hope that we would be a credit to the corps. I declared myself as a clerk as I considered it the most suitable reply to make. Messrs. Jenkins and Mold would own to nothing less exalted than "finishers." I could never discover what this profession implied—certainly I am not inclined to think that it had any connection with the completion of a day's work, for each of these worthies had "late corner boy" writ large upon his engaging countenance.

Lieutenant Marriott, the Adjutant, then informed me that I was posted to "F" Company, and that the other two recruits were both to adorn "B" Company. The Sergeant-major was then told to hand us over to the respective Colour-sergeants of these companies, and we were dismissed.

The new surroundings to which I was now introduced deserve a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER III

NEW SURROUNDINGS

ALMOST immediately after leaving the Orderly-room we encountered Colour-sergeant Burton, "F" Company's "Flag"—for by this expression are such Non-commissioned officers commonly known—and I was handed over to him.

He was a man of many good soldierly qualities, and readily offered to give me any assistance that he could. Before showing me into my barrack-room, he took me into his own little sanctum, or bunk, as these rooms are called. It was about as commodious as a third-class railway carriage compartment; but, as it was not inconveniently crowded with furniture (a narrow camp bed and a small table being all that it contained), this scarcely mattered. These bunks are provided for the separate accommodation, apart from the men, of Colour-sergeants and senior Sergeants.

Here we had a little conversation, which he concluded by observing that, while he would always be glad to help me in any way that he could, I was to be extremely careful to act for myself as far as possible. "Don't come to me more than you can help," he said; "it has a bad effect on the other men in your room if they see you running after the 'Flag' too much; they'll think you're currying favour. Take your place, and hold your own, and be careful not to stand any nonsense from the men. You'll have to do

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

what the Non-coms. tell you to—for even the junior Lance-corporal is your superior at present. Now, come along and see your room."

He opened an adjoining door, on which was painted the legend *Soldiers 15*, and a moment later we entered the barrack-room.

At first sight, I experienced something of a shock. I had not by any means expected a boudoir, but, at the same time, I was not quite prepared for the dismal casual-ward-like appearance which the apartment that we now stood in presented.

Round three sides of the room were placed, at a little distance from the walls, fifteen iron bed cots at intervals of about three-and-a-half feet from each other. These cots were so constructed that, when not in use, one-half can be doubled back and run under the other; thus it forms, by day, a sort of seat. A rolled-up mattress, on top of which, secured by a strap, are the sheets and blankets, provides a back for this seat. As soon as I saw them I had my doubts, to be more fully realised later on, as to the luxuriant ease and softness of these mattresses and severely springless bed-frames.

The floor was, of course, uncarpeted, and the walls were neither painted nor papered, but were thickly whitewashed instead. A selection of studies from the *Police Budget* relieved in some slight measure their uncompromising bareness.

At a height of about five feet from the floor a narrow shelf ran round three sides of the room. That part immediately above his bed was apportioned for the kit of each man; on pegs below hung his equipment, while his rifle was placed in a rack at the head of his cot.

A collection of plates and basins, with sundry odds and ends of bread, lay upon a shelf suspended by iron rods from the ceiling. Three wooden tables, resting on trestles, with half-a-dozen forms, occupied the centre of the room. Several mops and sweeping utensils were placed in a corner.

NEW SURROUNDINGS

There were some half-a-dozen men present, sitting round the fire, or else engaged in cleaning their accoutrements. On our entrance they naturally looked up. The cessation of conversation which ensued rather embarrassed me, but the Colour-sergeant came to my assistance.

"This is a new recruit, you men," he explained; "you will have to show him how to get along. Ward, you're the oldest soldier here, I think. You must take Robinson in hand, and help him with his equipment."

I was good-naturedly invited to take a seat by the fire, and, in a few minutes, we were all chatting busily. I passed my tobacco-pouch round, lit my pipe, and proceeded to obtain all the information concerning my new life that I could.

Excessive shyness is not a vice of the average soldier's, and I was very soon the recipient of a good deal of the most varied, if not profound, items of military intelligence. I was also made acquainted with some marvellous and hitherto unchronicled accounts of the records of my distinguished Corps.

Presently the Sergeant in charge of the room walked in and introduced himself to me. Owing to the limited number of bunks available, he was obliged to sleep in the barrack-room. This arrangement, although rather hard on him, perhaps, was advisable for the better maintenance of discipline, as there was no Corporal in the room.

Sergeant Thompson was a very good specimen of his class. He was a strict disciplinarian—at first, indeed, I thought him inclined to be far too martinet-like in disposition, until I was subsequently convinced of my mistake. He had a name in the Company for being perfectly "straight"—that is, a man of his word, and consequently no one ever presumed to take liberties with him. He had a high opinion of the dignity of his rank, and invariably insisted on its due observance on the part of his subordinates.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

Although Non-commissioned officers are generally imbued with a proper sense of their duties, it is not always the case with all who wear stripes. Some that I have come across had so little idea of their position that they would mix with the men in the freest manner possible, and seemed to be unable to properly appreciate the great difference that their status created between them. When N.C.O.'s and men are on such terms discipline cannot be properly upheld. Again, I have known Sergeants and Corporals to laugh and joke with a man one minute, and the next, losing temper at some liberty which he has naturally taken, to put him in the guard-room.

Presently the shrill notes of a bugle reached our ears. "There goes the cook-house ; come and give us a hand, some of you," cried one of the men.

"That's the first dinner-bugle sounding," explained the Sergeant, "and the Orderly-man has to go to the cook-house to fetch up the dinner."

About ten minutes later this man, with a couple of assistants, reappeared, bearing with them some baked beef in a dish, and a tin-full of boiled potatoes. This was placed on the table, and while some one arranged a plate for each man in the room the remainder cut up the meat and shared the potatoes.

According to barrack-room custom, meat is not cut into slices, it is hacked into lumps. Again, instead of placing a moderate portion by way of a first helping on each plate, every particle is cut from the bone and served out as far as it will go. Anything that, by any chance, happens to be left on the "tot," or bone, is the recognised perquisite of the Orderly-man. The same quaint system is in force with regard to the vegetables, or any other extra that may be provided. A lump of coarse salt is raked out of the dust on the shelf overhead, and a basin containing mustard is added. The Orderly-man inspects the various portions in order to satisfy himself that they are all of approximately the same size. When he is

NEW SURROUNDINGS

satisfied on this point, he gives the order "Take 'em away," and all hands promptly seize the plates which please them most, and, sitting down to the table, fall to with a vengeance. Table-cloths are considered unnecessary luxuries, and a piece of newspaper is a very fair substitute for a napkin; every man provides his own knife and fork.

Although disliking to appear fastidious, I really could not bring myself to eat the portion allotted to me. Nevertheless I sat down with the rest, and, although my statement that I was not hungry was received with the most incredulous air, no comments upon it were made in my hearing.

Another thing that very effectually deprived me of any appetite that I might have had was my compulsory observance of the peculiar habits of those dining with me. The manners and customs of my comrades were scarcely conducive to my making a good meal. I shall never forget the juggling feats that they performed with their knives, or the manner in which they would take lumps of meat from their plates, and for greater convenience cut them up on the bare table. Their fingers, too, in many instances played so important a part in this operation that knives and forks were rendered almost superfluous.

Later on I took the opportunity of privately asking Sergeant Thompson whether no steps were ever taken to compel the men to adopt a little more decency in their habits at meal times. He assured me that it was perfectly useless to attempt anything of the sort.

"As long as you're in the barrack-room you'll have to put up with it," he said, "but when you get into the Sergeants' mess you'll find things improved a bit. For the present you should take as little notice of it as you can."

Soon after the commencement of dinner the door was thrown open by a Corporal, who shouted "'Tchun!" in so fierce a tone that I quite thought that something

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

alarming was going to occur. It was, however, simply his manner of notifying the impending approach of the Orderly-officer. Following closely behind him came this personage.

"Any complaints?" he inquired interrogatively.

"None, Sir," replied the Orderly-man.

"'F' Company present, Sir," reported Sergeant Thompson; the officer went off to the next room, and the incident was over.

After dinner was concluded a Lance-corporal whom I had not yet met introduced himself to me, and informed me that he was to take me to the Quarter-master's stores for the purpose of seeing me fitted with uniform and supplied with the promised "free kit."

At the stores I found my Colour-sergeant waiting for me, as was also the Quarter-master. Besides these, the master-tailor of the battalion was present in his professional capacity.

I was soon provided with my uniform, which, after I had arrayed myself in it for the critical inspection of those present, was handed back to the store-keeper to be marked with my regimental number.

It should here, perhaps, be explained that the authorities at Pimlico, where all uniforms are made, seem to consider that the men should fit the clothing, and not necessarily the clothing the men. For this reason, all articles of military uniform are issued ready-made. If they happen, by any chance, to fit the recipient, well and good; if they don't, that is his look-out—not theirs. It is evidently his own fault for not being designed in accordance with the scale which the Army Clothing Department considers suitable for him. True it is that the regimental master-tailors have to make what alterations are thought to be necessary by the Quarter-master or other officer who superintends the fitting of a man's uniform, but it is a makeshift arrangement at the best. I have always had a great and ungratified curiosity to see what manner of built men are those whose measurements

NEW SURROUNDINGS

were decided upon as the standard on which to make the various sizes of uniform that are issued.

My next award was a canvas bag containing the celebrated "free kit." Here is an inventory of it, and its value as a whole. It will be observed that the boots, cap, leggings, and collar badges, &c., are classed as *Clothing*, while the brushes, socks, shirts, and cap-badge are termed *Necessaries*. Why this distinction is made between a badge for a cap and a badge for the collar of a jacket is a little difficult to understand; both articles are precisely the same:

Necessaries.—1 Cap-badge, 1 kit-bag, 1 tin of blacking, 1 pair of braces, 1 button brass, 1 comb, 1 blacking, polishing, brass, clothes, and shaving brush, 1 mess-tin, 1 fork, 1 knife, 1 spoon, 1 canvas hold-all, 1 jersey, 2 pairs of socks, 2 shirts, and 2 towels.

Clothing.—2 collar-badges, 2 pairs of boots, 1 cap, 1 great coat and cape, 1 kersey frock, 1 serge frock (Recruits'), 1 pair of cloth trousers, 1 pair of serge trousers (Recruits'), 1 tunic, 1 pair of white mitts, 1 haversack, and 1 pair of leggings.

The value of the above outfit of "Necessaries" and "Clothing" is, approximately, £5 13s. 9d., but it is impossible to state it exactly, as it varies constantly. When I enlisted the great coat and cape was valued at 17s. 11d., the new pattern ones which are now issued cost £1 5s. 5d. In foreign stations the price of an outfit is very much higher than it is at home. When serving abroad, at a later period, I was pained to find an increase of from 10 to 25 p. c. made in the charge for many items which it occasionally became necessary for me to purchase to keep up my kit.

A few words concerning this maintenance of kit, at the soldier's expense, will not here be out of place.

The well-known poster, "The General Advantages of the Army," states, in reference to this, "On first joining the Army, he is supplied with a complete outfit of clothing, and a free kit, containing such necessities as brushes,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

combs, razors, &c., and he is afterwards supplied periodically with the principal articles of his clothing without charge. He is required to keep up his underclothing and necessities at his own cost."

This certainly seems plain enough; and yet it is constantly being advanced against the authorities that they wilfully deceive the recruit by intimating in this that they undertake to keep him in clothing and kit free of expense during the whole of his service. I am at issue with the Government on many points that they do most distinctly promise in the other portions of this circular, and then fail to carry out, but, as far as the statement about clothing goes, it is in the main correct.

At my enlistment the regulations in force provided that, in addition to the first issue of the above kit, a soldier received annually a suit of clothes, a cap, and two pairs of boots. Every second year he was to receive an extra pair of trousers and a tunic.

His first supply of brushes, shirts, socks, towels, &c., had then, as now, to last him for the whole of his service. Whether this is an entirely liberal arrangement or not is, of course, a matter of opinion. For myself, I am not inclined to think it so. The most careful man alive can scarcely make his two shirts, two pairs of socks, towels, and a couple of tins of blacking, &c., last for the necessary seven years without showing undue signs of wear. As a matter of fact, the most economical soldier is from time to time called upon to purchase fresh supplies of these articles, while the careless and untidy are seldom out of the Quarter-master's books for several of these items. The monthly returns showing the amount deducted from the men's pay in each battalion for the purchase by them of "clothing and necessities" would convince the most sceptical that the regulation allowance is not sufficient.

Another grievance seems to be that men, on their enlistment, do not understand what is comprised by the technical term "necessaries," and therefore the statement

NEW SURROUNDINGS

that "they will be required to keep them up at their own cost" fails to have its significance.

Nor is the allowance of uniform a really adequate one. The clothing is manufactured out of what is little better than shoddy; a suit will become so shabby after a couple of months' wear that its owner is compelled to purchase another. The ease with which the red serge frock is stained by perspiration, especially across the shoulders where the valise rests, quickly renders the garment unfit for use. The trousers split at the seams, and after a few marches wear out at the bottoms. Most men have therefore to buy a frock and a couple of pairs of trousers every year. The tunic, which is made of cloth, is the only article of fair value in the whole outfit. The great coat and cape are renewed every five years. This is not often enough, when the amount of hard wear to which they are subjected is considered. This term should be reduced by two years.

The present regulations provide that this annual issue of a suit of clothing, cap, and pair of boots shall be made on the anniversary of a man's enlistment, instead of every April, as was formerly the case. It is also now possible for those men who may wish to do so to draw their allowance in cash instead of in kind. This seldom affects men serving at home, but for those abroad, where khaki is generally worn, this privilege of drawing "compensation" for the annual issue is greatly valued.

As for the quality of those articles classed as "necessaries" I must say that it was, taking into consideration the extremely moderate cost of many of them, fairly good. A razor and case, for instance, at 4½d. cannot leave much margin for profit to the contractor, and therefore its shortcomings as a shaving instrument may, perhaps, be forgiven. I always found mine more suitable for peeling potatoes than for anything else. The boots, invariably known as "ammunitions," are, as far as material goes, of good quality, but they are terrible to march in. They are enormously heavy, and the soles are so plentifully

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

studded with hob-nails that they seem to be almost armour-plated. The stiffness of the leather used in the uppers is undoubtedly largely responsible for the prevalence of sore feet on manœuvres. The first time that I marched in my "ammunitions" I was badly lamed for a fortnight. The towels, which, when new, closely resemble a piece of sacking, are also unsuitable for their purpose.

In addition to the above-mentioned articles of "clothing and necessaries," the recruit becomes the proud possessor of a complete set of equipment, comprising ammunition-pouches, valise, waist-belt, shoulder-straps, water-bottle, and haversack, with a rifle and bayonet. As a Fusilier, my head-dress was a busby, instead of the ordinary helmet of the majority of infantry battalions. On returning to my barrack-room I found that tea was in progress. This is by no means a ceremonious meal, and for very good reason—there is nothing to eat but what the soldier chooses to provide for himself. A tin pail-full of tea was shared out into each man's basin, but nothing in the shape of solid refreshment was contributed. It was explained to me that the allowance of bread was one pound per man daily, and that if he ate it all at breakfast and dinner he would have none left for tea. I therefore got one of the men to purchase for me an extra supply, together with some butter, from the regimental coffee-bar.

In the evening I went out to explore the streets of Dublin, but had to return early in order to be present at tattoo roll-call. This is held at 9.30 P.M., when all men not "on pass" or otherwise exempted from attending have to be present. With the assistance of my immediate neighbour I made down my bed and prepared for the night. It was with considerable misgivings as to its sleep-inciting qualities that I examined my bedding. The paillasse was stuffed with straw, and with no very great skill, as its lumpy appearance abundantly testified; the bolster—no pillow was provided—was thoughtfully filled with various odds and ends, and was about as soft as a

NEW SURROUNDINGS

piece of concrete. The blankets, four in number, were worn thin with age, and were of the same colour as a potato-sack; this peculiar shade to which army blankets are dyed has always struck me as being rather a good arrangement, inasmuch as it effectually conceals the filthiness which they so quickly assume. My first impression of the sheets was that I had got hold of a couple of pieces of sail-cloth by mistake, and their coarseness used at first to keep me awake for hours.

Just after half-past nine the roll was called by the Orderly-sergeant of the company, who visited each room in turn, and the men for guard or fatigue duties on the next day were then detailed by him. At a quarter-past ten, on the sounding of "lights out" by the bugler, the gas was extinguished, and my first day in my new life was over.

CHAPTER IV

INTERIOR ECONOMY

ABOUT 6.15 A.M. the uneasy slumber into which I had at last fallen was effectively disturbed by a succession of violent shocks on the floor. My first impression was that an earthquake at least had occurred, but I speedily ascertained that the disturbance was merely occasioned by the simple expedient of banging a form on the floor. It was by this rough-and-ready method that the Sergeant in charge of the room was accustomed to wake up the men at *réveille*. It was certainly effective in its results.

I had fortunately provided myself before leaving London with a few toilet articles and was therefore enabled to decline the kindly proffered loan of a tooth-brush. Taking my towel and soap with me, I accompanied the stream of men making for the ablution-room.

One or more of these places, generally known as wash-houses, take the place of lavatories in barracks. They are fitted with a number of fixed basins, with taps to each. Half-a-dozen slate or concrete baths are also partitioned off; but cold water only is laid on.

The next thing to do was to make up my bed. This has to be done in a certain manner. The paillasse is tightly rolled up, with the bolster inside; the blankets and sheets, folded neatly into a rectangle, are then placed on top, and the whole fastened by a strap passed round the paillasse and over the bedding. The bottom part of

INTERIOR ECONOMY

the cot is then slid under the upper end, thus forming a sort of chair for use during the day. Each man being held strictly responsible for the cleanliness of that part of the floor underneath and in the immediate vicinity of his own bed, I was directed to sweep this thoroughly with one of the brooms provided for the purpose.

As it was now close on the time appointed for the early morning parade, the men went down on to the square, buckling on their accoutrements as they left the room. As I was not yet in actual possession of my uniform, I was excused attendance, and passed the time in observing from a window the manœuvres of the others on the square below.

Besides myself, the Orderly-man of the day, and one or two of the others who were to go on guard presently, were left in the room. During the absence of the others on parade we finished cleaning it up. Preparations for breakfast were then undertaken.

This soon made its appearance. A tin pail-full of coffee and a pound of bread per man, with a small allowance of butter, formed the menu. The coffee and butter were provided by means of a compulsory stoppage of threepence per diem, which is made from each man's pay in the infantry—the rate is higher in the other branches. This deduction has also to supply tea, sugar, salt, potatoes, flour, &c., as none of these articles are included under the heading of "free rations." This is a matter of which I am perfectly certain only a very small fraction of recruits are aware of on their enlistment. My own impression, certainly, was that these items are so necessary that there could be no question of their not being issued under the heading of "rations." By calling them "groceries," which the "Advantages of the Army" placard states have to be paid for by the soldier, the responsibility of the authorities ceases. A little more candour about this matter would be as well. I very much doubt if one recruit in a hundred is at first aware that he is compelled to pay for these

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

groceries, whether he abstains from consuming them or not.*

Apropos of this matter, I remember asking one of the N.C.O.'s at St. George's what this expression, "he will be required to pay for his groceries" meant. "Well," he replied airily, "that only means any little extra in the shape of fish, eggs, bacon, butter, or jam, or anything of the sort that you may want."

"Oh, yes, and if I don't happen to want them, or prefer to buy them for myself, I suppose I can do so?"

"Course yer can!" was the ready, if scarcely correct, response of my informant.

This messing-money is taken charge of by the Colour-sergeants of companies, and by them entered to the credit of their respective companies with the Canteen. It is through this institution that all articles required for the extra messing must be procured. In a company with eighty-five privates in mess—the Sergeants being catered for separately—the sum credited daily to the mess-book would be £1 1s. 3d., and, in a month of thirty-one days, to £32 18s. 9d. This sum is devoted to the provision of additions to the daily meals in the shape of butter, jam, cheese, &c. If the funds in hand are carefully and economically expended, such luxuries as bacon, eggs, and fish are occasionally provided in small quantities, but reckless expenditure of this sort is deprecated. The daily amounts compulsorily applied to the purchase of tea, coffee, sugar, milk, and potatoes alone are so considerable that little margin is left for expenditure in other directions. A source of income, to the extent of about £2 per month, is added to each company's Canteen account by the amount realised by the sale of refuse from the cook-house.

The bread ration is one pound daily. It is baked in the Commissariat stores, and is usually of excellent quality. Occasionally one or two loaves of rather musty

* By the terms of a new regulation put into force last year the "grocery stoppage" has been abolished.

INTERIOR ECONOMY

flavour are smuggled in with the remainder, but representation in the proper quarter generally puts this right. As a rule, nothing could have been better than the ration bread issued at this time in Dublin.

On the whole the soldier has nothing to complain of regarding the quality of his bread ration, which is, in all probability, vastly superior to that which he has been in the habit of receiving prior to his enlistment.

Whether the quantity is sufficient or not is another matter. A pound of bread a day may, to the civilian reader, who finds ten or twelve ounces quite sufficient, seem a fair allowance. But other circumstances must be taken into consideration. The recruit is, as a general rule, a growing lad and the possessor of a more than healthy appetite. Before breakfast, he has done an hour's drill on the barrack square—and I would point out that "Physical Drill by Numbers" is highly successful in exciting a sluggish appetite—a source of complaint by the way to which but few soldiers are liable. I have frequently seen a hungry youngster, fresh from the exhilarating effects of the "Bayonet Exercise," consume almost the whole of his allowance at breakfast. Those who do this have naturally none left for dinner, tea, or supper, and if they cannot afford to buy any more have then to go without.

As soon as breakfast was over, I was sent for to the Quarter-master's stores, when my uniform and other articles of kit were handed over to me. On examining them I found that they had been very effectually marked, not by the addition of my name and titles, but by the emblazoning on them, in large black letters, of my regimental number.

Owing, I suppose, to the fact of my not being designed strictly in accordance with the measurements of "size eleven"—for by this number my uniform was officially described—the various garments had, on my trying them on in the Quarter-master's stores, been marked for considerable alteration by the regimental master-tailor and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

his assistants. Although I now examined them carefully, I was unable to see that any great difference (save perhaps in the matter of rubbing out the chalk marks which had been made on them for guidance) had been effected. Their "fit" still left a good deal to be desired—"ease before elegance" seemed to be the maxim on which the workmen had proceeded. "Can't let you have your clothes too tight: you must have room in them to grow," the Quarter-master had remarked when I had ventured to suggest that my chest measurement was under forty-three inches and that the trousers might very well be shortened by an inch or two.

Still, if they had received the official sanction, it was not for me to raise any question about their cut or appearance. I therefore got into them as soon as possible and tried to feel that they left nothing whatever to be desired.

The rest of the morning I spent in cleaning and putting together, in marching-order style, my equipment. The proper application of pipeclay to a pouch or belt is nothing less than an art, and proficiency therein is only attained by long practice. To assist me, I secured, on the advice of my Colour-sergeant, the services of an "old soldier," whom I appointed as valet, or, as the military expression has it, "bâtman." This personal attendant, Moran by name, was a man who had almost obtained the ripened maturity of twenty years of age, and had seen nearly four months' service. In the present short-service age it seems to be considered quite correct to term every man who has completed his "recruit's drill" an "old soldier." However, Moran was a hard-working fellow, with a perfect genius for rolling a great coat into the smallest possible compass, or packing a valise until it was as square as a box, and for many months proved himself an excellent bâtman. Unfortunately he, in after days, thought fit to relinquish his appointment for the chimera of regimental promotion. He reached, indeed, the dizzy height of probationary Lance-corporal, but this proved

INTERIOR ECONOMY

his undoing. Neglectful of the proper observance of his position, when charged with the responsibilities of Company Orderly-corporal, he was one fatal night found to be unduly under the influence of liquor. Reduction to the ranks was the penalty meted out to him.

Dinner at one P.M. was much the same as that which we had had the previous day. The meat ration is three-quarters of a pound per diem, but, as it is weighed with bone, and fat, and gristle (and other uneatable portions), by the time it has reached the men from the cook-house the actual amount apportioned to each man at dinner-time often dwindles down to an insignificant seven or eight ounces.

This is certainly not sufficient, especially as it is almost always all the meat that a man receives in twenty-four hours. Nor is the quality everything that can be desired. Mutton, instead of beef, is sometimes issued by the way of a change, but it is usually of the tinned Australian or frozen New Zealand variety. In the Mediterranean Stations, where frozen meat stores have been established, this is served out very often. Here, also, biscuits and tinned meat are served out once a week, in lieu of the ordinary rations, presumably with the idea of accustoming the troops to the necessary rigours of a siege.

From two to three P.M. I made my first acquaintance with the barrack square, where I performed an hour's drill. There was, at the time, a considerable number of recruits in the battalion; these had joined from the dépôt, only a day or two before my arrival. In accordance with the custom of the Fusiliers, they were being given the benefit of another month's instruction before being finally passed as "fit" to join the ranks of the full-blown "duty-men." By this term is meant all those who are considered to be sufficiently proficient in their drill to be available for guard and other duties. As a general rule, recruits are always sent to the regimental dépôt, to go through a course of three or four months' duration in drill and gymnastics. The two men who joined with me,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

were, however, sent straight to headquarters, owing to the fact that a draft had just left the depôt, and it was considered more convenient that we should join the battalion forthwith. This arrangement was certainly one of great advantage to me, as it saved me a preliminary three months' course of recruit's drill. As it was, in little more than a couple of months' time, I had attained the dignity of "duty" soldier.

CHAPTER V

ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS

IN order to accustom the troops to carrying their packs, as they would have to do constantly when on active service, route-marching is very much practised nowadays. This feature is a most uninteresting and unpleasant one. The term "route-marching" simply means making long tramps, ten to twenty miles in length, in full marching order along seemingly unending roads, in all sorts of weather, rain or fine. When a man is equipped like this, with a valise on his back containing several pounds' weight of small articles—such as socks, shirts, towels, cap, &c., a great coat and cape, mess-tin, waist-belt, ammunition-pouches, haversack, and water-bottle, in addition to his rifle and bayonet, he feels laden like a camel. Neither the helmet nor the busby, as worn at present, are ideal forms of head-dress, and the ammunition boots, which are *de rigueur* on these occasions, are positive instruments of torture. The soldier's clothing, too, is very badly adapted for long marches. From throat to heel no air whatever can reach his skin—except up his sleeves. The close-fitting collar of his serge frock or tunic grips him round the neck, his waist-belt compresses his stomach, and his stiff leather leggings render him air-tight from his knees downwards. The Army Medical Department have for years been raising their voice against the dress and equipment at present in

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

vogue, but without any avail. That something is radically wrong about it is abundantly proved by the numbers of men who are compelled to fall out during the progress of route-marches and on manœuvres. I have often been surprised to find the marching as good as it is, considering the food on which the men perform and the way in which they are equipped. When all dismounted officers are compelled to wear the same equipment as the men they march with they will then, perhaps, be disabused of their generally prevailing idea that it is "eminently suitable." Every now and again, I know, we see in the Service papers laudatory notices of the great feat of Lieutenant So-and-so, who marched twenty or twenty-five miles, or whatever it was, in "full marching order." But it has not been done under the same conditions as Private Jones has been compelled to do it. His officer has had a good night's rest, followed by a substantial breakfast, his uniform fits him easily, and is designed on comparatively hygienic principles, and, most important of all, his boots are made "to measure," and are not, as are the private's, an ill-fitting pair of "reach-me-downs." Again, the men in the ranks have to route-march almost daily during the season, while Lieutenant So-and-so has worn the pack on but one occasion; on the others, he finds it more pleasant to equip himself in the orthodox manner, and, burdened with nothing more weighty than his sword, adjure the men to "step out and not drag the pace"!

At the times of which I am speaking we used to route-march twice or three times a week, all through the winter months. The first few marches would be about ten or twelve miles in length, while those performed at the end of the season were extended to twenty miles or more. Lately, however, the system has been revised, and what is known as the "continuous practice" is in force. This system is one that annually provides for a week's continuous marching by every battalion stationed on Home Service. A hundred miles is the distance

ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS

generally covered during this period. The first day's march is about twelve miles in length, and on each of the five following days, rain, hail, snow, or shine, another couple of miles or so is added, until, on the sixth, they finish with, perhaps, twenty-five miles, and thus complete the total. It is no joke to go on guard and perform a few hours' sentry-go after one of these performances, as one generally feels pretty tired on their conclusion.

The longest march that I ever took part in was one of thirty-three miles in length. In carrying it out we occupied about twelve hours, including halts. This was a very good performance, but it was made under different conditions to those that are in force at home. It was when we were serving in South Africa, and were wearing thin khaki uniform instead of thick serge, and were also equipped in drill order, that is, waist-belt, pouch, rifle and bayonet only, instead of the complete pack.

Route-marching, as can well be imagined, is not too popular, and no one is particularly sorry when the season for this exercise is notified in the Garrison Orders as finished.

In addition to route-marches, field-days were at this time of frequent occurrence. Lord Wolseley was just then in command of the forces in Ireland, and his headquarters were at Kilmainham, about half a mile distant from Richmond Barracks. Twice a week at least, when weather permitted, and often when it did not, the troops in garrison would parade about 8.30 A.M., and spend several hours in skirmishing all over the surrounding country. Sometimes, when Outpost duty was being practised, we did not return to barracks until late in the afternoon. The rule that men going on guard were to attend these parades pressed rather hardly on those concerned. After a stiff day, from 8.30 A.M. to 3 P.M., or even later, spent in scouring the country round Dublin, sometimes covering twelve or fourteen miles at least in doing so, it was not too pleasant to have to march off to one of the Garrison Guards an hour after return to

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

barracks. Nevertheless, one soon gets accustomed to these little episodes, and it is as well to perform them without grumbling, for a discontented soldier is very rightly unpopular all round.

Very frequently the Phoenix Park was the scene of our manœuvres. This was greatly preferred by the troops, as it saved them many long marches before the day's work had started. On the occasions when the Park was the battle-ground a large number of civilians would assemble to watch the manœuvres.

On the whole, a field-day, or review, is decidedly an attraction to civilian onlookers. Undoubtedly the spectacle of a large number of troops of all arms—Cavalry, Infantry, and Artillery—manœuvring together, the bright uniforms, the gay trappings of Dragoons and Hussars, the inspiring music of the bands, the rolling of drums, and the braying of bugles, all combine to fill with martial ardour the souls of peaceful spectators by creating in them an ambition to be members of that same glittering throng. The spectacle forms a strong stimulant to recruiting.

With the troops themselves, however, the case is rather different; as a rule, after the novelty has worn off a little they are apt to loathe field-days with heart and soul, designating such exercises as "—— (strong words, unfit for publication) nuisances," and often not entirely without some reason. A field-day invariably means a hurried breakfast, a long march to the scene of the day's manœuvres, many hours spent under a hot sun, or exposed to wind and rain, without shelter, during which the troops are bound to considerably damage their uniforms, which have to be replaced at their own expense. Added to this, the energy of even the keenest of them evaporates somewhat, when, returning tired and dusty from a long day's exercise, he has to turn out spic-and-span in a couple of hours' time and mount guard.

Many amusing incidents occur on these field-days. Even the uninitiated civilian spectator, to whom the terms

ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS

"First Zone" and "Lines of Fire" are as things of no meaning, cannot fail to be impressed with the bland indifference displayed by the troops to shot and shell, or rather blank cartridges. Often have I seen a company of Infantry advancing with the greatest *sangfroid* imaginable across an open space which is supposed to be being swept by a perfect hail of bullets from the rifles or the deadly little Maxim guns of the enemy. Cavalry will gallop up without a waver to the very muzzles of the field-gun batteries in the most reckless fashion, and perform deeds of valour before which those of Balacava would pale into insignificance. Artillery, too, will limber and unlimber their guns with the utmost nonchalance while exposed to a murderous fire. Young Subalterns, fresh from Sandhurst—very Jominis in tactics are some of these warriors—will perform prodigies in the way of gallantly leading a mere handful of men to charge a strongly-entrenched position.

True it is that there are always umpires present, whose duty it is to prevent any such little episodes. These officers are by no means chary of making use of their power of ordering offending batteries, battalions, or bodies of men to withdraw from the ground, thereby putting them "out of action" and disqualifying them from taking further part in the proceedings. Still, however zealous and efficient they may be in their work, it is obviously impossible for them to be everywhere at once. Hence these sham fights frequently contain incidents that could scarcely occur in real action.

CHAPTER VI

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

In this manner passed my days for the next few weeks, every hour of which was fully occupied with drill, gymnastics, and barrack-room and equipment cleaning. The last parade of the day was generally over by 3 P.M., and we were then left to our own devices until tattoo roll-call at half-past nine. Three or four times during this period it devolved upon me to officiate as Orderly-man for the day. The duties entailed upon the occupant of this position, which is undertaken by each man in the barrack-room as his turn arrives, are as follows :

Directly after *réveille* he has to go to the guard-room, and, if any men of his room are confined there as prisoners, to fetch them their cleaning materials and remove their bedding. At breakfast-time he takes them their bread and coffee, as he also does to those men on Guard who belong to his room. He draws the bread and meat rations from the stores, carrying the bread to the barrack-room and the meat to the cook-house. From this place he procures from the Company cook the breakfast coffee.

As he is responsible for the general cleanliness of the room, and of the plates and basins, with tin cans and dishes in particular, he is usually excused attendance from minor parades. When the potatoes have been peeled after breakfast, he takes them to the cook. At

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

12.40 P.M. he fetches the dinner to his barrack-room, and is charged with the responsibility of apportioning it in the manner that has already been explained. When the meal is over he washes up the plates, &c., and returns the meat dish to the cook-house, depositing in the proper receptacle any refuse that may be left. At four o'clock he brings a pail of tea to his room, and gives each man his share.

This is only the very barest outline of his duties, which are far more multitudinous than most people would imagine. At all hours of the day the Orderly-corporal of his Company will find something for him to do, in the way of drawing groceries from the Canteen, taking meals to men on Guard, to prisoners, and to men in hospital, &c.

Altogether, by the time that "lights out" sounds, he will, if he has conscientiously performed all that has been required of him, be glad enough that his responsibilities as "Orderly-man" have, for a week or so, ceased.

The routine of an ordinary day in barracks would, roughly speaking, be something like this :

Réveille at 6, or 6.15, A.M. according to the season, breakfast at 8 ; orderly-room (for the disposal of prisoners and official business), 10-11 ; dinner at 1 o'clock, and tea at 4 P.M. ; tattoo roll-call at 9.30, and "lights out" at 10.15. The parades would probably be from 7 or 7.15 A.M. to 7.45, and again from 11-12. The recruits would also drill from 9-10, and in the afternoon—from 2-3. Field-days and route-marches would frequently be held in place of the ordinary parades.

To go more into detail, I will take an ordinary day's work from *réveille* to tattoo.

There is, I know, a long-cherished conviction on the part of the British public that every moment of a soldier's day is fully occupied in the laudable pursuit of those practices which are considered to be "conducive to the maintenance of his moral and military welfare"—or, at all events, in a manner that is useful as well as beneficial to his best interests. I should be sorry to do anything to

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

The next process necessary towards my conversion into a full-blown defender of my country was the undergoing of a medical inspection, after which, if all proved satisfactory, I should be required to take the Oath of Allegiance. This would bind me, in the terms of the "Short Service" system, to serve for seven years "with the colours" and five with the Reserve. If on active service, or abroad, at the expiration of this first period, I would be required to remain another twelve months with the colours. This, however, would be deducted from my subsequent service in the Reserve.

As a preliminary to the doctor's inspection it was announced to us that all aspirants were to be invested with the Order of the Bath. From a little preliminary inquiry on the subject I learned that the ablutionary accommodation at St. George's was so excessively limited that it would be necessary for each bath to do duty for a considerable number of applicants. Moreover, it appeared that, as the authorities did not consider it necessary to permit a fresh supply of water on each occasion, the honour would not be altogether a very pleasant one. Under these circumstances I resolved to decline the distinction. Sergeant Gibson fortunately stood my friend here, and enabled me to have my own way in this little matter.

It was now about eleven o'clock, and as the time for the doctor's visit was at hand, we were all conducted into an adjoining waiting-room, and told to strip to the original garments of our first parents. Acting on a hint given by the Corporal in charge of the room, I handed over to him my small stock of valuables together with my clothing, to look after for me while I waited my turn.

In a few minutes my name was called, and I entered the inspection-room. The medical examination, although of short duration, was fairly severe. I was first of all measured in all directions, my lungs sounded, and my anatomy minutely inspected from head to foot. I was then required to exhibit my powers in the way of hopping

AT ST. GEORGE'S

and jumping round the room. Having been pronounced proficient in these respects, my eyesight was next tested.

This is a point on which they are generally fairly strict in the Service, and with good reason, for a man who cannot see well certainly cannot shoot well. The test lies in correctly estimating the number of dots on a series of cards, held at various distances from the eyes. It is not the easiest thing in the world to do this properly at the first attempt, and many a man fails from nervousness as much as from actual incapacity.

All of us who satisfied the doctor as to our physical capacity to serve were required to undergo one last ceremony before our initiation should be completed. This was the taking of the Oath of Allegiance in the presence of a magistrate.

This incident was performed by those pronounced, like myself, medically fit, in batches of a dozen at a time. When it came to my turn I joined a group ordered to march into the recruiting-office. Here were waiting a Staff officer in charge of the proceedings, and a civilian gentleman, who in his capacity as a magistrate of the county was authorised to swear in recruits. In obedience to his instructions we ranged ourselves round a long table on which lay several tattered and extremely soiled bibles. I gingerly selected the least dirty-looking one visible and held myself in readiness for action.

The terms of the oath were then announced by the magistrate at a speed which betrayed his evident anxiety to go home for his luncheon. So far as I recollect, the administration was made something in this fashion :

“ Now then, stop talking, and pay attention ! ” exclaimed the official sharply.

“ All you men here do make oath that you will be faithful, and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, and that you will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, her heirs and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

successors, and all generals and officers set over you. So help you God! Kiss the book. Go outside and shut the door!"

The kissing of the book, or books, as each man is provided with a separate copy, was not too pleasant an operation, for it must be remembered that they have done duty from time immemorial for generations of recruits. Under these circumstances their condition can best be imagined. In the interests of cleanliness alone some other procedure might, it seemed to me, be more fittingly adopted.

On the whole I considered that I was justified in refraining from performing this portion of the ceremony. Nevertheless, I do not think that my oath was any the less sincere on that account. Some of the men, however, made up for this little discrepancy on my part by kissing their bibles with gusto, invoking at the same time strange deities in aid of their due observance of their vows. My immediate neighbour, for instance, audibly exclaimed "S'elp me Gawd! May I be struck pink if I go back on it!"

With the taking of this oath the rubicon was irrecoverably crossed, and from that moment we became, to all intents and purposes, soldiers of the regular forces. We represented many branches and departments—Houshold Cavalrymen, Hussars, and Dragoons, with Guardsmen, Linesmen, and Highlanders—all had here their representatives. Beside myself, two of the party had elected to become Fusiliers, and, after a few minutes' waiting we were told that we should be sent to join the 1st battalion of the regiment at Dublin, on the following day. Till three o'clock the next afternoon we were at liberty to do as we liked. At this hour, however, we were required to report ourselves to the N.C.O. detailed to conduct us to the Blankshires' head-quarters.

The Corporal, Hobson by name, selected for this duty took the opportunity of informing me that any one absenting himself on this occasion would be treated as a deserter.

AT ST. GEORGE'S

To put him at his ease, I promptly assured him that I had no intention of distinguishing myself in so signal a manner at this early stage of my military career. When he had become convinced on this point we parted the best of friends.

CHAPTER II

EN ROUTE

IN my anxiety lest I should by any chance miss the train, I arrived at St. George's at least an hour before the appointed time on the following afternoon. This period of waiting I spent very profitably in talking to old Gibson.

"I gave you some hints yesterday," he said in parting, "and here's another for you. In the days to come you'll find some rough times before you, that you don't dream of now, and wouldn't understand if I was to speak of 'em. Whatever happens, mind this, and you'll be all right—keep a stiff upper lip and take it as all in the day's work. That's the proper way to soldier! Don't get down in the mouth, and want to chuck it before you've done six months' service. Stick it for all you're worth, and you'll come out on top at the end. And now, here's Corporal Hobson and his two youngsters waiting for you, so good-bye again."

When I had shaken hands with him and turned to go, I felt that I had parted with a true friend. Often in the days to come did his words, spoken on that long distant afternoon, recall themselves to me. A few months ago when I went, on finding myself once more in London, to call on him, I was pained to learn that he had been in his grave for some years.

The Corporal now came up with a couple of weedy-looking youths in tow, who, as fellow-Fusiliers, were with

EN ROUTE

myself to complete the reinforcements to the Dublin garrison. One of these might have reached the dignity of seventeen years of age, but nothing would induce me to believe that the other was a day more than sixteen. Soldiering, however, as some one says, makes strange travelling companions, and I did not care to be too critical just then. All the same, the prospect of walking across London in such company appealed to me so little that I volunteered to be responsible for the necessary cab fare to Euston. Corporal Hobson agreed to this proposal, although he demurred at first to my wasting money which might be put to so much better a use—in the way of providing liquid refreshment, he was good enough to explain. I effectually overcame his scruples by undertaking to attend to this as well.

On the arrival of the mail train we took our seats, and in a few minutes were speeding onwards to our destination. After a brief but unsuccessful attempt to pass the time in reading I lay back in my corner and tried to sleep, but in this I was not any the more successful.

As I had feared my travelling companions did not prove of the most desirable description. They were festively inclined and evidently resolved to make the most of the few hours that yet intervened between themselves and the trammels of military discipline. A succession of stirring songs with remarkably vigorous choruses, and a pack of cards served to while away the hours. At every stoppage they insisted on putting their heads out of the windows and indulging in a little playful badinage with the guards, porters, and passengers on the platform. However, everything comes to an end sooner or later, and at length we reached Holyhead.

It was midnight when we arrived, and there was no time to do more than hurry from the station to the dock, where lay the magnificent saloon steamship *Hibernia*, as she was described in the advertisement. Before I had been many minutes on board I was strongly of opinion that "cattle-boat" would be a more fitting term to apply

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

to her. To put it plainly the *Hibernia* was a sorry old tub, and the "magnificent saloon" was not in evidence at all, owing to its being temporarily occupied by a cargo of pigs destined for the Dublin market.

There was certainly a bar on board, which seemed to be doing a roaring trade, but any privacy in the shape of a cabin to sleep in was impossible to obtain. I soon gave up my search for such a luxury, and, enveloped in a rug with which I had fortunately provided myself, lay down on a deck seat and presently fell fast asleep.

Shortly after seven o'clock the next morning the *Hibernia* was moored alongside the wharf in North Wall Dock. When the cessation of the motion caused by the paddles made this welcome intelligence known to them my travelling companions emerged from the fastnesses where they had hitherto stowed themselves away. Desperately unhappy did these youths appear now, for the foul fiend *mal-de-mer* had evidently gripped them hard. The gallant Corporal, too, had quite lost that air of reckless abandon which had stood him in such good stead on the railway journey.

Some refreshment, which we obtained at the station buffet, soon put new life into our party. Sea-sick or not, my brothers in arms attacked the viands that I had weakly undertaken to pay for with a vigour that astonished me. I began to think that we should never see barracks.

"After we've drunk our gallant friend's very good 'ealth, and wished him suitable luck for 'is generous treatment," remarked Corporal Hobson reflectively, when he had at last finished stoking, "we'd better make a move. Now, you youngsters, don't sit there blowing your bags out any longer, like a couple of blooming young pigs! 'Tchun!"

Learning from our conductor that our destination—Richmond Barracks—was situated some three miles away, I promptly suggested the advisability of driving there. The Corporal concurred, and volunteered the remark that he had thought of making the same proposal himself.

EN ROUTE

However, he did not enlighten me as to whether he had also intended to bear the expense, and on this point I thought it as well not to press him. Accordingly a car was chartered, and we were soon rattling at a fair pace over the cobble stones towards our goal.

Various places of interest *en route* were pointed out to me by our guide.

"That's the Bank," he said, as we passed the famous building ; " you'll probably find yourself doing sentry-go there in a month or so, perhaps."

A few minutes later and we came to the Castle.

"That's another guard," he remarked ; " try and grip No. 2 post the first time you go on."

" Why ? " I asked inquiringly.

"Oh, because the orders are easiest to learn there," was the explanation he vouchsafed. Rather wondering what this might mean I mentally resolved to investigate the matter at a more fitting opportunity.

Presently he pointed out Kilmainham Prison, a gloomy-looking building in the Inchicore Road. Here, he informed me, it would be more in accordance with the fitness of things to leave the car and finish the remainder of the short journey on foot.

"You see," he explained, "it doesn't do to put any side on for a start. It's precious few recruits that can drive into barracks. Besides, you'll soon find better use for your money than spending it on car fares."

We entered the barrack-gate, the sentry, as we passed him, coming smartly to the "shoulder."

"Eyes right !" commanded the Corporal in return.

Neither myself nor my two companions understanding how this manœuvre was effected we continued serenely on our way across the square. For myself, I had some doubt as to whether I ought not to raise my hat as a graceful acknowledgment to the other's salutation.

Our conductor, however, had different views on the subject.

"Look here !" he shouted fiercely, "when I gives the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

command *Eyes right*, I wants to see yer 'eads an' eyes turned in the required direction, in accordance with instructions laid down in the manual for Infantry Drill, or else I'll precious soon know the reason why!"

The worthy Corporal's sudden development of this aggressively martinet-like spirit was merely assumed for the benefit of the onlookers, who crowded round us in a quite embarrassing manner. Our immediate destination was the Orderly-room. Here our papers were delivered to a clerk and we were handed over to the Sergeant-major.

"So these are the new recruits, are they, Corporal?" he remarked, eyeing me with evident dissatisfaction.

"Yessir, brought 'em from St. George's last night."

"Humph! it's a dashed pity you didn't lose 'em on the way then," returned the Sergeant-major shortly. "However, they can't be much worse than the last few batches you've got hold of for us lately."

It may not, perhaps, be out of place to here say a few words regarding this functionary. He attains his rank by warrant, and is, therefore, a Warrant officer. Although not, of course, on an equal standing with a Commissioned officer, it is, nevertheless, directed that he be "invariably addressed in the same respectful manner." His authority over the Non-commissioned officers and men is paramount. He details the numbers required for guard and other duties daily, and exercises a strict supervision over the rank and file in general. He marches at the head of the battalion, and on the drill square is the terror of recruits. For these multitudinous duties he is remunerated at the rate of 5s. per diem. The position is seldom attained under fourteen or fifteen years' service, and is usually rewarded after a short period by promotion to the Commissioned ranks as Quarter-master. This post is the blue ribbon of the ranks, and is the highest ambition of every Non-commissioned officer and man.

Our interview with the Sergeant-major, generally referred to, for the sake of brevity, as the S.M., was soon

EN ROUTE

over. After inspecting us critically, he communicated to a friend his impression that "it was a rum world." He did not offer to explain this enigmatical remark, but told us that the Colonel and Adjutant would see us in a few minutes. While we were waiting he gave me some good advice as to the proper sort of bearing to observe in my new surroundings.

"I don't know at all what your ideas may be, Robinson," he said, "but if you happen to think that the Service is all beans and bacon, you're making a mistake that's as big as the bull's-eye on a first-class target. It's a damned hard life at the start, and it rests with yourself if it's to continue so. Another thing: don't make too many friends—they'll be always wanting to borrow your money and smoke your baccy. I hope you're going in for promotion, but don't be disappointed if you're not made Colour-sergeant in a week. You won't get the colours, or anything else, until you're fit for them."

He next proceeded to harangue my two companions.

"Now then, you youngsters! You want to be soldiers, I suppose, and by the grace of God—and punishment drill if necessary—I'll turn you out so. It's like your infernal impudence though, to come into the Fusiliers at all, and I don't know what they can be thinking of at St. George's. Now, bear in mind that you're always to do exactly what you're told, whether you like it or not—you probably won't like it at all, but that won't matter in the least. Keep yourselves clean, and be as smart as Providence will permit you, and you'll get on all right. None of your damned cockney monkey-tricks here, d'ye understand?"

"Yes, mister, that'll be all right," remarked one of them confidentially in response to this exhortation.

"Say *Sir*, you lop-sided caricature of a half-baked militia-man, when you speak to me!" thundered the outraged S.M., "and stand to attention, too, if you know how to."

The terrified youth, Jenkins by name, humbly assured

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

him that "he didn't mean no 'arm," and withdrew in fear and trembling to communicate with his friend Mold.

"You see," observed the S.M. to me under his breath, "I'm bound to shake these fellows up at the start, or else they'll be thinking that they can take all sorts of liberties with their superiors," and then aloud, "Come along now, and go before the Colonel."

Ushered by him into the presence of the Commanding-officer, who was sitting in his office in company with the Adjutant, we made our first acquaintance with these officers.

Colonel Douglas, a tall thin man, with bushy eyebrows and fiercely curled moustache, regarded us fixedly for a few moments, and, after asking us our names, and the trade or calling in which we had last been engaged, expressed a hope that we would be a credit to the corps. I declared myself as a clerk as I considered it the most suitable reply to make. Messrs. Jenkins and Mold would own to nothing less exalted than "finishers." I could never discover what this profession implied—certainly I am not inclined to think that it had any connection with the completion of a day's work, for each of these worthies had "late corner boy" writ large upon his engaging countenance.

Lieutenant Marriott, the Adjutant, then informed me that I was posted to "F" Company, and that the other two recruits were both to adorn "B" Company. The Sergeant-major was then told to hand us over to the respective Colour-sergeants of these companies, and we were dismissed.

The new surroundings to which I was now introduced deserve a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER III

NEW SURROUNDINGS

ALMOST immediately after leaving the Orderly-room we encountered Colour-sergeant Burton, "F" Company's "Flag"—for by this expression are such Non-commissioned officers commonly known—and I was handed over to him.

He was a man of many good soldierly qualities, and readily offered to give me any assistance that he could. Before showing me into my barrack-room, he took me into his own little sanctum, or bunk, as these rooms are called. It was about as commodious as a third-class railway carriage compartment; but, as it was not inconveniently crowded with furniture (a narrow camp bed and a small table being all that it contained), this scarcely mattered. These bunks are provided for the separate accommodation, apart from the men, of Colour-sergeants and senior Sergeants.

Here we had a little conversation, which he concluded by observing that, while he would always be glad to help me in any way that he could, I was to be extremely careful to act for myself as far as possible. "Don't come to me more than you can help," he said; "it has a bad effect on the other men in your room if they see you running after the 'Flag' too much; they'll think you're currying favour. Take your place, and hold your own, and be careful not to stand any nonsense from the men. You'll have to do

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

what the Non-coms. tell you to—for even the junior Lance-corporal is your superior at present. Now, come along and see your room."

He opened an adjoining door, on which was painted the legend *Soldiers 15*, and a moment later we entered the barrack-room.

At first sight, I experienced something of a shock. I had not by any means expected a boudoir, but, at the same time, I was not quite prepared for the dismal casualward-like appearance which the apartment that we now stood in presented.

Round three sides of the room were placed, at a little distance from the walls, fifteen iron bed cots at intervals of about three-and-a-half feet from each other. These cots were so constructed that, when not in use, one-half can be doubled back and run under the other; thus it forms, by day, a sort of seat. A rolled-up mattress, on top of which, secured by a strap, are the sheets and blankets, provides a back for this seat. As soon as I saw them I had my doubts, to be more fully realised later on, as to the luxuriant ease and softness of these mattresses and severely springless bed-frames.

The floor was, of course, uncarpeted, and the walls were neither painted nor papered, but were thickly whitewashed instead. A selection of studies from the *Police Budget* relieved in some slight measure their uncompromising bareness.

At a height of about five feet from the floor a narrow shelf ran round three sides of the room. That part immediately above his bed was apportioned for the kit of each man; on pegs below hung his equipment, while his rifle was placed in a rack at the head of his cot.

A collection of plates and basins, with sundry odds and ends of bread, lay upon a shelf suspended by iron rods from the ceiling. Three wooden tables, resting on trestles, with half-a-dozen forms, occupied the centre of the room. Several mops and sweeping utensils were placed in a corner.

NEW SURROUNDINGS

There were some half-a-dozen men present, sitting round the fire, or else engaged in cleaning their accoutrements. On our entrance they naturally looked up. The cessation of conversation which ensued rather embarrassed me, but the Colour-sergeant came to my assistance.

"This is a new recruit, you men," he explained; "you will have to show him how to get along. Ward, you're the oldest soldier here, I think. You must take Robinson in hand, and help him with his equipment."

I was good-naturedly invited to take a seat by the fire, and, in a few minutes, we were all chatting busily. I passed my tobacco-pouch round, lit my pipe, and proceeded to obtain all the information concerning my new life that I could.

Excessive shyness is not a vice of the average soldier's, and I was very soon the recipient of a good deal of the most varied, if not profound, items of military intelligence. I was also made acquainted with some marvellous and hitherto unchronicled accounts of the records of my distinguished Corps.

Presently the Sergeant in charge of the room walked in and introduced himself to me. Owing to the limited number of bunks available, he was obliged to sleep in the barrack-room. This arrangement, although rather hard on him, perhaps, was advisable for the better maintenance of discipline, as there was no Corporal in the room.

Sergeant Thompson was a very good specimen of his class. He was a strict disciplinarian—at first, indeed, I thought him inclined to be far too martinet-like in disposition, until I was subsequently convinced of my mistake. He had a name in the Company for being perfectly "straight"—that is, a man of his word, and consequently no one ever presumed to take liberties with him. He had a high opinion of the dignity of his rank, and invariably insisted on its due observance on the part of his subordinates.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

Although Non-commissioned officers are generally imbued with a proper sense of their duties, it is not always the case with all who wear stripes. Some that I have come across had so little idea of their position that they would mix with the men in the freest manner possible, and seemed to be unable to properly appreciate the great difference that their status created between them. When N.C.O.'s and men are on such terms discipline cannot be properly upheld. Again, I have known Sergeants and Corporals to laugh and joke with a man one minute, and the next, losing temper at some liberty which he has naturally taken, to put him in the guard-room.

Presently the shrill notes of a bugle reached our ears. "There goes the cook-house ; come and give us a hand, some of you," cried one of the men.

"That's the first dinner-bugle sounding," explained the Sergeant, "and the Orderly-man has to go to the cook-house to fetch up the dinner."

About ten minutes later this man, with a couple of assistants, reappeared, bearing with them some baked beef in a dish, and a tin-full of boiled potatoes. This was placed on the table, and while some one arranged a plate for each man in the room the remainder cut up the meat and shared the potatoes.

According to barrack-room custom, meat is not cut into slices, it is hacked into lumps. Again, instead of placing a moderate portion by way of a first helping on each plate, every particle is cut from the bone and served out as far as it will go. Anything that, by any chance, happens to be left on the "tot," or bone, is the recognised perquisite of the Orderly-man. The same quaint system is in force with regard to the vegetables, or any other extra that may be provided. A lump of coarse salt is raked out of the dust on the shelf overhead, and a basin containing mustard is added. The Orderly-man inspects the various portions in order to satisfy himself that they are all of approximately the same size. When he is

NEW SURROUNDINGS

satisfied on this point, he gives the order "Take 'em away," and all hands promptly seize the plates which please them most, and, sitting down to the table, fall to with a vengeance. Table-cloths are considered unnecessary luxuries, and a piece of newspaper is a very fair substitute for a napkin; every man provides his own knife and fork.

Although disliking to appear fastidious, I really could not bring myself to eat the portion allotted to me. Nevertheless I sat down with the rest, and, although my statement that I was not hungry was received with the most incredulous air, no comments upon it were made in my hearing.

Another thing that very effectually deprived me of any appetite that I might have had was my compulsory observance of the peculiar habits of those dining with me. The manners and customs of my comrades were scarcely conducive to my making a good meal. I shall never forget the juggling feats that they performed with their knives, or the manner in which they would take lumps of meat from their plates, and for greater convenience cut them up on the bare table. Their fingers, too, in many instances played so important a part in this operation that knives and forks were rendered almost superfluous.

Later on I took the opportunity of privately asking Sergeant Thompson whether no steps were ever taken to compel the men to adopt a little more decency in their habits at meal times. He assured me that it was perfectly useless to attempt anything of the sort.

"As long as you're in the barrack-room you'll have to put up with it," he said, "but when you get into the Sergeants' mess you'll find things improved a bit. For the present you should take as little notice of it as you can."

Soon after the commencement of dinner the door was thrown open by a Corporal, who shouted "'Tchun!" in so fierce a tone that I quite thought that something

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

alarming was going to occur. It was, however, simply his manner of notifying the impending approach of the Orderly-officer. Following closely behind him came this personage.

"Any complaints?" he inquired interrogatively.

"None, Sir," replied the Orderly-man.

"'F' Company present, Sir," reported Sergeant Thompson; the officer went off to the next room, and the incident was over.

After dinner was concluded a Lance-corporal whom I had not yet met introduced himself to me, and informed me that he was to take me to the Quarter-master's stores for the purpose of seeing me fitted with uniform and supplied with the promised "free kit."

At the stores I found my Colour-sergeant waiting for me, as was also the Quarter-master. Besides these, the master-tailor of the battalion was present in his professional capacity.

I was soon provided with my uniform, which, after I had arrayed myself in it for the critical inspection of those present, was handed back to the store-keeper to be marked with my regimental number.

It should here, perhaps, be explained that the authorities at Pimlico, where all uniforms are made, seem to consider that the men should fit the clothing, and not necessarily the clothing the men. For this reason, all articles of military uniform are issued ready-made. If they happen, by any chance, to fit the recipient, well and good; if they don't, that is his look-out—not theirs. It is evidently his own fault for not being designed in accordance with the scale which the Army Clothing Department considers suitable for him. True it is that the regimental master-tailors have to make what alterations are thought to be necessary by the Quarter-master or other officer who superintends the fitting of a man's uniform, but it is a makeshift arrangement at the best. I have always had a great and ungratified curiosity to see what manner of built men are those whose measurements

NEW SURROUNDINGS

were decided upon as the standard on which to make the various sizes of uniform that are issued.

My next award was a canvas bag containing the celebrated "free kit." Here is an inventory of it, and its value as a whole. It will be observed that the boots, cap, leggings, and collar badges, &c., are classed as *Clothing*, while the brushes, socks, shirts, and cap-badge are termed *Necessaries*. Why this distinction is made between a badge for a cap and a badge for the collar of a jacket is a little difficult to understand; both articles are precisely the same:

Necessaries.—1 Cap-badge, 1 kit-bag, 1 tin of blacking, 1 pair of braces, 1 button brass, 1 comb, 1 blacking, polishing, brass, clothes, and shaving brush, 1 mess-tin, 1 fork, 1 knife, 1 spoon, 1 canvas hold-all, 1 jersey, 2 pairs of socks, 2 shirts, and 2 towels.

Clothing.—2 collar-badges, 2 pairs of boots, 1 cap, 1 great coat and cape, 1 kersey frock, 1 serge frock (Recruits'), 1 pair of cloth trousers, 1 pair of serge trousers (Recruits'), 1 tunic, 1 pair of white mitts, 1 haversack, and 1 pair of leggings.

The value of the above outfit of "Necessaries" and "Clothing" is, approximately, £5 13s. 9d., but it is impossible to state it exactly, as it varies constantly. When I enlisted the great coat and cape was valued at 17s. 11d., the new pattern ones which are now issued cost £1 5s. 5d. In foreign stations the price of an outfit is very much higher than it is at home. When serving abroad, at a later period, I was pained to find an increase of from 10 to 25 p. c. made in the charge for many items which it occasionally became necessary for me to purchase to keep up my kit.

A few words concerning this maintenance of kit, at the soldier's expense, will not here be out of place.

The well-known poster, "The General Advantages of the Army," states, in reference to this, "On first joining the Army, he is supplied with a complete outfit of clothing, and a free kit, containing such necessities as brushes,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

combs, razors, &c., and he is afterwards supplied periodically with the principal articles of his clothing without charge. He is required to keep up his underclothing and necessaries at his own cost."

This certainly seems plain enough ; and yet it is constantly being advanced against the authorities that they wilfully deceive the recruit by intimating in this that they undertake to keep him in clothing and kit free of expense during the whole of his service. I am at issue with the Government on many points that they do most distinctly promise in the other portions of this circular, and then fail to carry out, but, as far as the statement about clothing goes, it is in the main correct.

At my enlistment the regulations in force provided that, in addition to the first issue of the above kit, a soldier received annually a suit of clothes, a cap, and two pairs of boots. Every second year he was to receive an extra pair of trousers and a tunic.

His first supply of brushes, shirts, socks, towels, &c., had then, as now, to last him for the whole of his service. Whether this is an entirely liberal arrangement or not is, of course, a matter of opinion. For myself, I am not inclined to think it so. The most careful man alive can scarcely make his two shirts, two pairs of socks, towels, and a couple of tins of blacking, &c., last for the necessary seven years without showing undue signs of wear. As a matter of fact, the most economical soldier is from time to time called upon to purchase fresh supplies of these articles, while the careless and untidy are seldom out of the Quarter-master's books for several of these items. The monthly returns showing the amount deducted from the men's pay in each battalion for the purchase by them of "clothing and necessaries" would convince the most sceptical that the regulation allowance is not sufficient.

Another grievance seems to be that men, on their enlistment, do not understand what is comprised by the technical term "necessaries," and therefore the statement

NEW SURROUNDINGS

that "they will be required to keep them up at their own cost" fails to have its significance.

Nor is the allowance of uniform a really adequate one. The clothing is manufactured out of what is little better than shoddy; a suit will become so shabby after a couple of months' wear that its owner is compelled to purchase another. The ease with which the red serge frock is stained by perspiration, especially across the shoulders where the valise rests, quickly renders the garment unfit for use. The trousers split at the seams, and after a few marches wear out at the bottoms. Most men have therefore to buy a frock and a couple of pairs of trousers every year. The tunic, which is made of cloth, is the only article of fair value in the whole outfit. The great coat and cape are renewed every five years. This is not often enough, when the amount of hard wear to which they are subjected is considered. This term should be reduced by two years.

The present regulations provide that this annual issue of a suit of clothing, cap, and pair of boots shall be made on the anniversary of a man's enlistment, instead of every April, as was formerly the case. It is also now possible for those men who may wish to do so to draw their allowance in cash instead of in kind. This seldom affects men serving at home, but for those abroad, where khaki is generally worn, this privilege of drawing "compensation" for the annual issue is greatly valued.

As for the quality of those articles classed as "necessaries" I must say that it was, taking into consideration the extremely moderate cost of many of them, fairly good. A razor and case, for instance, at 4½d. cannot leave much margin for profit to the contractor, and therefore its shortcomings as a shaving instrument may, perhaps, be forgiven. I always found mine more suitable for peeling potatoes than for anything else. The boots, invariably known as "ammunitions," are, as far as material goes, of good quality, but they are terrible to march in. They are enormously heavy, and the soles are so plentifully

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

studded with hob-nails that they seem to be almost armour-plated. The stiffness of the leather used in the uppers is undoubtedly largely responsible for the prevalence of sore feet on manœuvres. The first time that I marched in my "ammunitions" I was badly lamed for a fortnight. The towels, which, when new, closely resemble a piece of sacking, are also unsuitable for their purpose.

In addition to the above-mentioned articles of "clothing and necessities," the recruit becomes the proud possessor of a complete set of equipment, comprising ammunition-pouches, valise, waist-belt, shoulder-straps, water-bottle, and haversack, with a rifle and bayonet. As a Fusilier, my head-dress was a busby, instead of the ordinary helmet of the majority of infantry battalions. On returning to my barrack-room I found that tea was in progress. This is by no means a ceremonious meal, and for very good reason—there is nothing to eat but what the soldier chooses to provide for himself. A tin pail-full of tea was shared out into each man's basin, but nothing in the shape of solid refreshment was contributed. It was explained to me that the allowance of bread was one pound per man daily, and that if he ate it all at breakfast and dinner he would have none left for tea. I therefore got one of the men to purchase for me an extra supply, together with some butter, from the regimental coffee-bar.

In the evening I went out to explore the streets of Dublin, but had to return early in order to be present at tattoo roll-call. This is held at 9.30 P.M., when all men not "on pass" or otherwise exempted from attending have to be present. With the assistance of my immediate neighbour I made down my bed and prepared for the night. It was with considerable misgivings as to its sleep-inciting qualities that I examined my bedding. The paillasse was stuffed with straw, and with no very great skill, as its lumpy appearance abundantly testified; the bolster—no pillow was provided—was thoughtfully filled with various odds and ends, and was about as soft as a

NEW SURROUNDINGS

piece of concrete. The blankets, four in number, were worn thin with age, and were of the same colour as a potato-sack ; this peculiar shade to which army blankets are dyed has always struck me as being rather a good arrangement, inasmuch as it effectually conceals the filthiness which they so quickly assume. My first impression of the sheets was that I had got hold of a couple of pieces of sail-cloth by mistake, and their coarseness used at first to keep me awake for hours.

Just after half-past nine the roll was called by the Orderly-sergeant of the company, who visited each room in turn, and the men for guard or fatigue duties on the next day were then detailed by him. At a quarter-past ten, on the sounding of "lights out" by the bugler, the gas was extinguished, and my first day in my new life was over.

CHAPTER IV

INTERIOR ECONOMY

ABOUT 6.15 A.M. the uneasy slumber into which I had at last fallen was effectively disturbed by a succession of violent shocks on the floor. My first impression was that an earthquake at least had occurred, but I speedily ascertained that the disturbance was merely occasioned by the simple expedient of banging a form on the floor. It was by this rough-and-ready method that the Sergeant in charge of the room was accustomed to wake up the men at *réveille*. It was certainly effective in its results.

I had fortunately provided myself before leaving London with a few toilet articles and was therefore enabled to decline the kindly proffered loan of a tooth-brush. Taking my towel and soap with me, I accompanied the stream of men making for the ablution-room.

One or more of these places, generally known as wash-houses, take the place of lavatories in barracks. They are fitted with a number of fixed basins, with taps to each. Half-a-dozen slate or concrete baths are also partitioned off; but cold water only is laid on.

The next thing to do was to make up my bed. This has to be done in a certain manner. The paillasse is tightly rolled up, with the bolster inside; the blankets and sheets, folded neatly into a rectangle, are then placed on top, and the whole fastened by a strap passed round the paillasse and over the bedding. The bottom part of

INTERIOR ECONOMY

the cot is then slid under the upper end, thus forming a sort of chair for use during the day. Each man being held strictly responsible for the cleanliness of that part of the floor underneath and in the immediate vicinity of his own bed, I was directed to sweep this thoroughly with one of the brooms provided for the purpose.

As it was now close on the time appointed for the early morning parade, the men went down on to the square, buckling on their accoutrements as they left the room. As I was not yet in actual possession of my uniform, I was excused attendance, and passed the time in observing from a window the manœuvres of the others on the square below.

Besides myself, the Orderly-man of the day, and one or two of the others who were to go on guard presently, were left in the room. During the absence of the others on parade we finished cleaning it up. Preparations for breakfast were then undertaken.

This soon made its appearance. A tin pail-full of coffee and a pound of bread per man, with a small allowance of butter, formed the menu. The coffee and butter were provided by means of a compulsory stoppage of threepence per diem, which is made from each man's pay in the infantry—the rate is higher in the other branches. This deduction has also to supply tea, sugar, salt, potatoes, flour, &c., as none of these articles are included under the heading of "free rations." This is a matter of which I am perfectly certain only a very small fraction of recruits are aware of on their enlistment. My own impression, certainly, was that these items are so necessary that there could be no question of their not being issued under the heading of "rations." By calling them "groceries," which the "Advantages of the Army" placard states have to be paid for by the soldier, the responsibility of the authorities ceases. A little more candour about this matter would be as well. I very much doubt if one recruit in a hundred is at first aware that he is compelled to pay for these

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

groceries, whether he abstains from consuming them or not.*

Apropos of this matter, I remember asking one of the N.C.O.'s at St. George's what this expression, "he will be required to pay for his groceries" meant. "Well," he replied airily, "that only means any little extra in the shape of fish, eggs, bacon, butter, or jam, or anything of the sort that you may want."

"Oh, yes, and if I don't happen to want them, or prefer to buy them for myself, I suppose I can do so?"

"Course yer can!" was the ready, if scarcely correct, response of my informant.

This messing-money is taken charge of by the Colour-sergeants of companies, and by them entered to the credit of their respective companies with the Canteen. It is through this institution that all articles required for the extra messing must be procured. In a company with eighty-five privates in mess—the Sergeants being catered for separately—the sum credited daily to the mess-book would be £1 1s. 3d., and, in a month of thirty-one days, to £32 18s. 9d. This sum is devoted to the provision of additions to the daily meals in the shape of butter, jam, cheese, &c. If the funds in hand are carefully and economically expended, such luxuries as bacon, eggs, and fish are occasionally provided in small quantities, but reckless expenditure of this sort is deprecated. The daily amounts compulsorily applied to the purchase of tea, coffee, sugar, milk, and potatoes alone are so considerable that little margin is left for expenditure in other directions. A source of income, to the extent of about £2 per month, is added to each company's Canteen account by the amount realised by the sale of refuse from the cook-house.

The bread ration is one pound daily. It is baked in the Commissariat stores, and is usually of excellent quality. Occasionally one or two loaves of rather musty

* By the terms of a new regulation put into force last year the "grocery stoppage" has been abolished.

INTERIOR ECONOMY

flavour are smuggled in with the remainder, but representation in the proper quarter generally puts this right. As a rule, nothing could have been better than the ration bread issued at this time in Dublin.

On the whole the soldier has nothing to complain of regarding the quality of his bread ration, which is, in all probability, vastly superior to that which he has been in the habit of receiving prior to his enlistment.

Whether the quantity is sufficient or not is another matter. A pound of bread a day may, to the civilian reader, who finds ten or twelve ounces quite sufficient, seem a fair allowance. But other circumstances must be taken into consideration. The recruit is, as a general rule, a growing lad and the possessor of a more than healthy appetite. Before breakfast, he has done an hour's drill on the barrack square—and I would point out that "Physical Drill by Numbers" is highly successful in exciting a sluggish appetite—a source of complaint by the way to which but few soldiers are liable. I have frequently seen a hungry youngster, fresh from the exhilarating effects of the "Bayonet Exercise," consume almost the whole of his allowance at breakfast. Those who do this have naturally none left for dinner, tea, or supper, and if they cannot afford to buy any more have then to go without.

As soon as breakfast was over, I was sent for to the Quarter-master's stores, when my uniform and other articles of kit were handed over to me. On examining them I found that they had been very effectually marked, not by the addition of my name and titles, but by the emblazoning on them, in large black letters, of my regimental number.

Owing, I suppose, to the fact of my not being designed strictly in accordance with the measurements of "size eleven"—for by this number my uniform was officially described—the various garments had, on my trying them on in the Quarter-master's stores, been marked for considerable alteration by the regimental master-tailor and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

his assistants. Although I now examined them carefully, I was unable to see that any great difference (save perhaps in the matter of rubbing out the chalk marks which had been made on them for guidance) had been effected. Their "fit" still left a good deal to be desired—"ease before elegance" seemed to be the maxim on which the workmen had proceeded. "Can't let you have your clothes too tight: you must have room in them to grow," the Quarter-master had remarked when I had ventured to suggest that my chest measurement was under forty-three inches and that the trousers might very well be shortened by an inch or two.

Still, if they had received the official sanction, it was not for me to raise any question about their cut or appearance. I therefore got into them as soon as possible and tried to feel that they left nothing whatever to be desired.

The rest of the morning I spent in cleaning and putting together, in marching-order style, my equipment. The proper application of pipeclay to a pouch or belt is nothing less than an art, and proficiency therein is only attained by long practice. To assist me, I secured, on the advice of my Colour-sergeant, the services of an "old soldier," whom I appointed as valet, or, as the military expression has it, "bâtman." This personal attendant, Moran by name, was a man who had almost obtained the ripened maturity of twenty years of age, and had seen nearly four months' service. In the present short-service age it seems to be considered quite correct to term every man who has completed his "recruit's drill" an "old soldier." However, Moran was a hard-working fellow, with a perfect genius for rolling a great coat into the smallest possible compass, or packing a valise until it was as square as a box, and for many months proved himself an excellent bâtman. Unfortunately he, in after days, thought fit to relinquish his appointment for the chimera of regimental promotion. He reached, indeed, the dizzy height of probationary Lance-corporal, but this proved

INTERIOR ECONOMY

his undoing. Neglectful of the proper observance of his position, when charged with the responsibilities of Company Orderly-corporal, he was one fatal night found to be unduly under the influence of liquor. Reduction to the ranks was the penalty meted out to him.

Dinner at one P.M. was much the same as that which we had had the previous day. The meat ration is three-quarters of a pound per diem, but, as it is weighed with bone, and fat, and gristle (and other uneatable portions), by the time it has reached the men from the cook-house the actual amount apportioned to each man at dinner-time often dwindles down to an insignificant seven or eight ounces.

This is certainly not sufficient, especially as it is almost always all the meat that a man receives in twenty-four hours. Nor is the quality everything that can be desired. Mutton, instead of beef, is sometimes issued by the way of a change, but it is usually of the tinned Australian or frozen New Zealand variety. In the Mediterranean Stations, where frozen meat stores have been established, this is served out very often. Here, also, biscuits and tinned meat are served out once a week, in lieu of the ordinary rations, presumably with the idea of accustoming the troops to the necessary rigours of a siege.

From two to three P.M. I made my first acquaintance with the barrack square, where I performed an hour's drill. There was, at the time, a considerable number of recruits in the battalion ; these had joined from the dépôt, only a day or two before my arrival. In accordance with the custom of the Fusiliers, they were being given the benefit of another month's instruction before being finally passed as "fit" to join the ranks of the full-blown "duty-men." By this term is meant all those who are considered to be sufficiently proficient in their drill to be available for guard and other duties. As a general rule, recruits are always sent to the regimental dépôt, to go through a course of three or four months' duration in drill and gymnastics. The two men who joined with me,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

were, however, sent straight to headquarters, owing to the fact that a draft had just left the dépôt, and it was considered more convenient that we should join the battalion forthwith. This arrangement was certainly one of great advantage to me, as it saved me a preliminary three months' course of recruit's drill. As it was, in little more than a couple of months' time, I had attained the dignity of "duty" soldier.

CHAPTER V

ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS

IN order to accustom the troops to carrying their packs, as they would have to do constantly when on active service, route-marching is very much practised nowadays. This feature is a most uninteresting and unpleasant one. The term "route-marching" simply means making long tramps, ten to twenty miles in length, in full marching order along seemingly unending roads, in all sorts of weather, rain or fine. When a man is equipped like this, with a valise on his back containing several pounds' weight of small articles—such as socks, shirts, towels, cap, &c., a great coat and cape, mess-tin, waist-belt, ammunition-pouches, haversack, and water-bottle, in addition to his rifle and bayonet, he feels laden like a camel. Neither the helmet nor the busby, as worn at present, are ideal forms of head-dress, and the ammunition boots, which are *de rigueur* on these occasions, are positive instruments of torture. The soldier's clothing, too, is very badly adapted for long marches. From throat to heel no air whatever can reach his skin—except up his sleeves. The close-fitting collar of his serge frock or tunic grips him round the neck, his waist-belt compresses his stomach, and his stiff leather leggings render him air-tight from his knees downwards. The Army Medical Department have for years been raising their voice against the dress and equipment at present in

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

vogue, but without any avail. That something is radically wrong about it is abundantly proved by the numbers of men who are compelled to fall out during the progress of route-marches and on manœuvres. I have often been surprised to find the marching as good as it is, considering the food on which the men perform and the way in which they are equipped. When all dismounted officers are compelled to wear the same equipment as the men they march with they will then, perhaps, be disabused of their generally prevailing idea that it is "eminently suitable." Every now and again, I know, we see in the Service papers laudatory notices of the great feat of Lieutenant So-and-so, who marched twenty or twenty-five miles, or whatever it was, in "full marching order." But it has not been done under the same conditions as Private Jones has been compelled to do it. His officer has had a good night's rest, followed by a substantial breakfast, his uniform fits him easily, and is designed on comparatively hygienic principles, and, most important of all, his boots are made "to measure," and are not, as are the private's, an ill-fitting pair of "reach-me-downs." Again, the men in the ranks have to route-march almost daily during the season, while Lieutenant So-and-so has worn the pack on but one occasion; on the others, he finds it more pleasant to equip himself in the orthodox manner, and, burdened with nothing more weighty than his sword, adjure the men to "step out and not drag the pace"!

At the times of which I am speaking we used to route-march twice or three times a week, all through the winter months. The first few marches would be about ten or twelve miles in length, while those performed at the end of the season were extended to twenty miles or more. Lately, however, the system has been revised, and what is known as the "continuous practice" is in force. This system is one that annually provides for a week's continuous marching by every battalion stationed on Home Service. A hundred miles is the distance

ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS

generally covered during this period. The first day's march is about twelve miles in length, and on each of the five following days, rain, hail, snow, or shine, another couple of miles or so is added, until, on the sixth, they finish with, perhaps, twenty-five miles, and thus complete the total. It is no joke to go on guard and perform a few hours' sentry-go after one of these performances, as one generally feels pretty tired on their conclusion.

The longest march that I ever took part in was one of thirty-three miles in length. In carrying it out we occupied about twelve hours, including halts. This was a very good performance, but it was made under different conditions to those that are in force at home. It was when we were serving in South Africa, and were wearing thin khaki uniform instead of thick serge, and were also equipped in drill order, that is, waist-belt, pouch, rifle and bayonet only, instead of the complete pack.

Route-marching, as can well be imagined, is not too popular, and no one is particularly sorry when the season for this exercise is notified in the Garrison Orders as finished.

In addition to route-marches, field-days were at this time of frequent occurrence. Lord Wolseley was just then in command of the forces in Ireland, and his headquarters were at Kilmainham, about half a mile distant from Richmond Barracks. Twice a week at least, when weather permitted, and often when it did not, the troops in garrison would parade about 8.30 A.M., and spend several hours in skirmishing all over the surrounding country. Sometimes, when Outpost duty was being practised, we did not return to barracks until late in the afternoon. The rule that men going on guard were to attend these parades pressed rather hardly on those concerned. After a stiff day, from 8.30 A.M. to 3 P.M., or even later, spent in scouring the country round Dublin, sometimes covering twelve or fourteen miles at least in doing so, it was not too pleasant to have to march off to one of the Garrison Guards an hour after return to

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

barracks. Nevertheless, one soon gets accustomed to these little episodes, and it is as well to perform them without grumbling, for a discontented soldier is very rightly unpopular all round.

Very frequently the Phoenix Park was the scene of our manœuvres. This was greatly preferred by the troops, as it saved them many long marches before the day's work had started. On the occasions when the Park was the battle-ground a large number of civilians would assemble to watch the manœuvres.

On the whole, a field-day, or review, is decidedly an attraction to civilian onlookers. Undoubtedly the spectacle of a large number of troops of all arms—Cavalry, Infantry, and Artillery—manœuvring together, the bright uniforms, the gay trappings of Dragoons and Hussars, the inspiring music of the bands, the rolling of drums, and the braying of bugles, all combine to fill with martial ardour the souls of peaceful spectators by creating in them an ambition to be members of that same glittering throng. The spectacle forms a strong stimulant to recruiting.

With the troops themselves, however, the case is rather different; as a rule, after the novelty has worn off a little they are apt to loathe field-days with heart and soul, designating such exercises as “—— (strong words, unfit for publication) nuisances,” and often not entirely without some reason. A field-day invariably means a hurried breakfast, a long march to the scene of the day's manœuvres, many hours spent under a hot sun, or exposed to wind and rain, without shelter, during which the troops are bound to considerably damage their uniforms, which have to be replaced at their own expense. Added to this, the energy of even the keenest of them evaporates somewhat, when, returning tired and dusty from a long day's exercise, he has to turn out spic-and-span in a couple of hours' time and mount guard.

Many amusing incidents occur on these field-days. Even the uninitiated civilian spectator, to whom the terms

ROUTE-MARCHING AND FIELD-DAYS

"First Zone" and "Lines of Fire" are as things of no meaning, cannot fail to be impressed with the bland indifference displayed by the troops to shot and shell, or rather blank cartridges. Often have I seen a company of Infantry advancing with the greatest *sangfroid* imaginable across an open space which is supposed to be being swept by a perfect hail of bullets from the rifles or the deadly little Maxim guns of the enemy. Cavalry will gallop up without a waver to the very muzzles of the field-gun batteries in the most reckless fashion, and perform deeds of valour before which those of Balaclava would pale into insignificance. Artillery, too, will limber and unlimber their guns with the utmost nonchalance while exposed to a murderous fire. Young Subalterns, fresh from Sandhurst—very Jominis in tactics are some of these warriors—will perform prodigies in the way of gallantly leading a mere handful of men to charge a strongly-entrenched position.

True it is that there are always umpires present, whose duty it is to prevent any such little episodes. These officers are by no means chary of making use of their power of ordering offending batteries, battalions, or bodies of men to withdraw from the ground, thereby putting them "out of action" and disqualifying them from taking further part in the proceedings. Still, however zealous and efficient they may be in their work, it is obviously impossible for them to be everywhere at once. Hence these sham fights frequently contain incidents that could scarcely occur in real action.

CHAPTER VI

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

In this manner passed my days for the next few weeks, every hour of which was fully occupied with drill, gymnastics, and barrack-room and equipment cleaning. The last parade of the day was generally over by 3 P.M., and we were then left to our own devices until tattoo roll-call at half-past nine. Three or four times during this period it devolved upon me to officiate as Orderly-man for the day. The duties entailed upon the occupant of this position, which is undertaken by each man in the barrack-room as his turn arrives, are as follows :

Directly after *réveille* he has to go to the guard-room, and, if any men of his room are confined there as prisoners, to fetch them their cleaning materials and remove their bedding. At breakfast-time he takes them their bread and coffee, as he also does to those men on Guard who belong to his room. He draws the bread and meat rations from the stores, carrying the bread to the barrack-room and the meat to the cook-house. From this place he procures from the Company cook the breakfast coffee.

As he is responsible for the general cleanliness of the room, and of the plates and basins, with tin cans and dishes in particular, he is usually excused attendance from minor parades. When the potatoes have been peeled after breakfast, he takes them to the cook. At

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

12.40 P.M. he fetches the dinner to his barrack-room, and is charged with the responsibility of apportioning it in the manner that has already been explained. When the meal is over he washes up the plates, &c., and returns the meat dish to the cook-house, depositing in the proper receptacle any refuse that may be left. At four o'clock he brings a pail of tea to his room, and gives each man his share.

This is only the very barest outline of his duties, which are far more multitudinous than most people would imagine. At all hours of the day the Orderly-corporal of his Company will find something for him to do, in the way of drawing groceries from the Canteen, taking meals to men on Guard, to prisoners, and to men in hospital, &c.

Altogether, by the time that "lights out" sounds, he will, if he has conscientiously performed all that has been required of him, be glad enough that his responsibilities as "Orderly-man" have, for a week or so, ceased.

The routine of an ordinary day in barracks would, roughly speaking, be something like this:

Réveille at 6, or 6.15, A.M. according to the season, breakfast at 8; orderly-room (for the disposal of prisoners and official business), 10-11; dinner at 1 o'clock, and tea at 4 P.M.; tattoo roll-call at 9.30, and "lights out" at 10.15. The parades would probably be from 7 or 7.15 A.M. to 7.45, and again from 11-12. The recruits would also drill from 9-10, and in the afternoon—from 2-3. Field-days and route-marches would frequently be held in place of the ordinary parades.

To go more into detail, I will take an ordinary day's work from *réveille* to tattoo.

There is, I know, a long-cherished conviction on the part of the British public that every moment of a soldier's day is fully occupied in the laudable pursuit of those practices which are considered to be "conducive to the maintenance of his moral and military welfare"—or, at all events, in a manner that is useful as well as beneficial to his best interests. I should be sorry to do anything to

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

dispel this pleasing idea. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the average soldier, who has, in all probability, for several years prior to his enlistment, been accustomed to work from six in the morning until six in the dewy evening, for five and a-half days a week, enjoys a very much larger and more liberal amount of leisure than most people are aware of. How greatly is this the case will best be seen from this account of a typical day in the life of a Private soldier of any Infantry battalion. In the other branches of the service different conditions naturally prevail. Of course, the day's routine varies according to the season of the year and the station where the battalion is quartered—service at home, by the way, being under totally different conditions to service abroad.

We will suppose it to be in the winter months. At 6.15 A.M. his slumbers are effectually disturbed by the bugler on duty sounding *réveille*. On hearing this summons all good soldiers immediately turn out of bed. The average soldier, however, who is not always good, very probably thinks that the state of his health is such as to require a few minutes' extra repose. Nevertheless, he deems it advisable to turn out when the Sergeant in charge of the room does so.

The first thing that he then does is to roll up his mattress and to fold his sheets and blankets neatly and with mathematical precision in the regulation manner.

This done he proceeds to sweep the floor under and around his bed, each man in the room being held responsible for the cleanliness of that portion in the immediate vicinity of his own cot. He next rushes off to the wash-house, where he performs his very necessary, if, at times, somewhat hurried, ablutions. As a rule the British soldier is clean in his person. Still, this cleanliness is often due to the force of circumstances rather than to personal inclination. All the same, it is no uncommon thing to see a soldier using a tooth-brush, but in this article of the toilet he is economical, and does not object to procure it at second hand when possible.

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

At seven o'clock, or a quarter past, he attends, unless employed on duty or otherwise exempted, a parade lasting about three-quarters of an hour. During this exercise he will probably undergo the exhilarating process of doubling half-a-dozen times round the square—(this manœuvre, which is commonly referred to as a "chest expander," is an excellent method of coaxing a dilettante appetite)—and winds up with fifteen minutes' "Physical Drill."

As soon as the parade is dismissed it is breakfast-time.

While their comrades have been on parade the Orderly-men have, under the superintendence of the Orderly-officer, drawn from the Quarter-master's stores the bread and meat rations for the day. I have, I think, already mentioned that the allowance is one pound of bread per man, with three-quarters of a pound of meat, in which is included a very fair amount of gristle, bone, and fat (for in this manner is construed the "free ration of three-quarters of a pound of meat daily"). The tea or coffee has also been fetched from the cook-house, and each man's share poured into the basins provided for the purpose—cups and saucers being considered unnecessary luxuries in a barrack-room.

While breakfast is in progress the Orderly-officer of the day commences his tour of inspection. Preceded by a Sergeant, whose duty it is to give notice of the officer's approach by flinging open each door, rapping on it with his stick, and shouting "'Shon!" in an unnecessarily loud tone of voice, he inquires at each barrack-room, in turn, if there are "any complaints?" "None, Sir," replies the Orderly-man, on behalf of his messmates. Exit the Orderly-officer and his satellite.

Perchance, however, even the long-suffering "old soldier" is, on this particular occasion, dissatisfied with the matutinal meal provided for him, the richness and variety of the viands failing to sufficiently recommend themselves to his critical taste this morning. The mess-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

ing-money which, as has been explained in an earlier chapter, is deducted from his daily pay, seldom goes further (after the tea, coffee, sugar, and potatoes, and other equally necessary items have been paid for) than to provide a little butter on three, or, at the most, four mornings a week. Consequently, on other days his fare is dry bread and tea. I am writing now of 1890; in the present year of grace, according to the Army pamphlets lately published, it would almost appear that the soldier has half-a-dozen courses for breakfast, various snacks to sustain him through the day, and an elaborate menu at dinner.

Let it be supposed that a soldier has, on this occasion, made up his mind to complain about the tea, the quality of which he considers to be under the required standard. This may very often be the case. Even the best-intentioned contractor can hardly be expected to supply a particularly fragrant quality of Souchong at a price to be retailed from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per lb., and this after the rapacious and grasping maw of the Canteen, through whose agency it has to be repurchased, has exacted its percentage.

In duty bound, the officer proceeds to investigate the alleged cause of complaint. "What's the matter with the tea?" he inquires; "it looks all right." A basin of more than doubtful cleanliness, containing a muddy-looking liquid (a chemical analysis of which would probably reveal something startling), is thrust under his nose. "Taste it, Sir," says the Orderly-man, "'taint fit for pigs!" "No, thank you," hastily exclaims the officer, regretting his ill-advised expression of opinion regarding its merits. "You may get some coffee instead, *out of the mess-book*, and I'll speak to the Canteen-steward." This is poor consolation, as anything procured out of the mess-book is purchased with the men's own money.

On those occasions when no extra at all is provided, the troops are said to be having "slingers," or "coffee cutlets," for breakfast. Concerning "slingers," there is a

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

story of a certain young Subaltern, who, on his first tour of duty as Orderly-officer, was anxious to ingratiate himself with the men of his Company. Accordingly, on arriving at the first barrack-room, he inquired of the N.C.O. in charge what they were having for breakfast? "Slingers, sir," replied the Corporal all unconsciously. "Oh, indeed," was the answer of the officer, who did not at all know what this word meant, "if the men like them, let them in future have slingers for breakfast twice a week, at my expense."

Breakfast over, all hands commence "speed practice—" that is, to peel the potatoes for dinner. When this has been done the Orderly-man takes them to the cook-house.

For the recruits there is a parade from 9-10; the others are free for the next two hours. These men, therefore, set to work to clean up the room; the tables are diligently scrubbed, the trestles and form legs blackleaded, the breakfast things washed up, the floor swept, and the hearth whitewashed. When all this has been done to the satisfaction of the N.C.O. in charge they are at liberty to clean their own accoutrements and to get ready for the eleven-o'clock parade.

This parade, which is of three kinds, is of various degrees of importance. It may be under the command of the Sergeant-major, the Adjutant, or the Commanding-officer. If the latter, which takes place at least once a week, it is "as strong as possible." This means that all the "employed men," such as servants, grooms, waiters, tailors, shoemakers, &c.—the drones in the military hive—with but few exceptions, attend. This is an excellent arrangement, as it prevents these men getting rusty at their drill. It is on this parade that Court-martial prisoners are "read out" (*i.e.*, have their sentences publicly announced, that their comrades may take warning at their fate). The Sergeant-major's and the Adjutant's parades are not, as a rule, attended by the "employed men." Thus it often happens that on such occasions a battalion is represented by about one hundred and fifty files, while

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

on a Commanding-officer's parade, when every available man is in the ranks, this number is nearly doubled.

The parade lasts for about an hour, and is probably over by noon. On returning to their barrack-rooms, the men hang up their accoutrements, and give a last touch to the rooms, in view of their inspection by the Orderly-officer at dinner-time. Those who drink will now probably repair to the Canteen, which is open at twelve o'clock, for their matutinal pint. Here the soldier is wont to seek relief from the fatigues of the morning in the cup that cheers—only it is generally a quart pot, and frequently inebriates as well.

At twenty minutes to one the bugler sounds the welcome dinner-call. In obedience to its summons the Orderly-men parade at the cook-house to draw for their respective messes their allowance of the roast beef of Old England, which is, by the way, occasionally Australian or New Zealand, and tinned as well. The dinners, previous to their being issued, are inspected by the Orderly-officer. In order to promote a spirit of healthy emulation among the military chefs a prize of five shillings is granted each month to that individual who, in the opinion of the inspecting-officer, has distinguished himself during that period by producing the greatest number of best-cooked dinners.

At one o'clock the Orderly-officer again makes his rounds and inquires as usual, "Any complaints?" Scarcely waiting for an answer, he hurries off to another room, and for some minutes the only evidences of his existence are a banging of doors and a gradually diminishing echo of "Tenshun! Any complaints?"

Immediately dinner is over some hot water is fetched up from the cook-house by the hard-working Orderly-man. With the assistance of the other men in the room he proceeds to swill down the tables and to wash up the plates that have been in use. All the bones, spare meat, and portions of vegetables, &c., are carefully collected and taken by him to the cook-house. Here they are taken in

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

charge of by the Sergeant-cook and sold to a contractor. The money thus received is divided among the different Companies, and the share received by each amounts to about £2 per month. This is credited to the mess-book, it being a very hard-and-fast rule that all such sums should be expended on extra messing.

The recruits will probably have another parade in the afternoon, from three to four P.M. The old soldiers—every man who has completed his recruit's drill and blossomed into a duty-man considers himself an old soldier—have nothing now to do until the next morning. Of course if they are on guard, picquet, or fatigue duty, they will not have this leisure, but it does not fall, as a rule, to a man to be on these duties more than two or three times a week.

This interval is spent in various ways, according to the inclination of the individual. Some pass an hour or two at football, others stew over the Canteen fire, while others, again, lie down on their beds and sleep the afternoon away, waking up, as if by clockwork, at four P.M. for tea.

This is a repetition of breakfast, and what is left of the bread allowance is now eaten. Those who have already consumed their share either go without or else buy more from the coffee-shop. I have used the expression "tea," but this is simply for the sake of convenience. The cheering beverage masquerading under this title is made in the approved Army cook-house style. Into a tin pail which has just been used for washing up greasy plates is shaken as much "tea" as the cook, in his wisdom, considers sufficient. Several grimy handfuls of coarse brown sugar are next added. The pail is three parts filled with more or less boiling water (boiled in the same coppers as are potatoes by the way), a small quantity of milk is added, and the whole stirred vigorously with a mop handle or any other convenient utensil. A cloth or old potato-sack is then thrown over the top of each pail, which is put back beside the fire, for its con-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

tents to stew for an hour. The Company-cook, having then completed his duty, goes to sleep with a good conscience until four o'clock.

Studiously inclined men are afforded an opportunity to go to the regimental school in the afternoon; this often proves of great advantage to themselves, especially if they aim at promotion. Indeed, this is withheld until a third-class certificate at least has been gained.

Soldiers very seldom go out in the afternoon; in the evenings it is very different. By eight o'clock comparatively few men are left in the barrack-rooms. They have all gone out "to give the girls a treat," or otherwise enjoy themselves. Some patronise the theatres and music-halls in the garrison, while others visit their friends in the different barracks, or pass the evening more congenially in sampling the attractions of rival Canteens. Those who stop in barracks either have no money or else are occupied with some duty which prevents their going out.

When a soldier intends to go out for the evening to seek a little relaxation from military duty he first makes a few preparations in the way of enhancing his personal appearance. Most soldiers have many little vanities, and are as particular in their attention to these as any woman. But this is generally only in the days of their extreme youth: with increasing age usually comes more sense.

The soldier's chief pride and glory in the earlier stages of his career seems to lie in his hair. We have all of us, no doubt, noted the peculiarly natty manner in which he is then wont to dress his locks, and, with his forage-cap stuck jauntily on the side of his head, promenades the town during the evening hours for the express purpose of, as he puts it, "knocking 'em!" The particularly graceful—I had almost written greaseful—habit that he affects of allowing a large and well-oiled lock to protrude over his forehead with an artistic upward curl is known in the ranks as "sporting a quiff."

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

To cultivate a "quiff"—the orthography of the word is a little doubtful—is the great aim of the average recruit's existence. Towards the attainment of this highly desirable adornment he proceeds as follows:—First of all, if he is successful in eluding the ever-watchful eye of the Sergeant-major (which, by the way, is a difficult matter), he suffers his hair to grow long in front and to hang over his forehead. This lock he plentifully besmears with grease or soap, and trains to hang in two graceful and oily festoons over his temples, brushing them well up at the side. For this purpose he makes use of the cleaning-rod of his rifle as a curling-iron. Then, with his cap balanced carefully on the side of his head, he sallies forth to conquer in all the pride of his glory and greasiness.

Of course, a soldier is not allowed to appear on parade like this. On such occasions the offending "quiff" is carefully hidden under his cap. Although there are frequent "hair inspections," at which, if a man's hair appears to be growing unduly long in front, he is ordered to have it cut at once, he, nevertheless, is generally successful, with the aid of a "nimble twopence"—the price of a pint—in persuading the regimental barber to preserve intact his prized adornment from the devastating scissors.

With regard to the soldier's hair, Lord Wolseley, in his well-known "Pocket-Books," says :

"In the field no man's hair should exceed half an inch in length; this is essential for the well-being and cleanliness of soldiers . . . No man can have that smart bearing—which is the outward mark of a soldier—who allows his hair to be so long that he can part it. . . . Hair is the glory of a woman, but the shame of a man."

This, perhaps, is going a little too far, for there should surely be some difference between the close-cut hair of a soldier and the crop of a convict. Nevertheless it is, at all events, a fault—if fault it be—on the right side.

After his hair, his trousers and head-gear next claim a

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

man's attention. With regard to his nether garments, it is the aim of his existence that they should be of that particular cut known as "bell-bottoms." The characteristics of this pattern are that the "strides" should be made very tight in the upper part of the legs and at the knee; from this point downwards they fit loosely, and descend in graceful and bell-shaped curves over the boots. This pleasing style is technically known as "having one's strides cut a bit saucy-like over the trotters."

As to his head-gear, with the present field-service pattern he cannot do much, but in Scotch regiments, where the "glengarry" is worn, he affects a design peculiarly his own. He first procures an ordinary cap from the regimental stores. This is really of such a particularly hideous description that a man has some excuse for trying to effect an improvement in its appearance. He accordingly considers that this desirable object is attained by cutting an inch or two off the bottom all round. This reduces the height of a cap to about two and a half inches, and really effects an improvement on the original pattern. Not satisfied with this, however, he proceeds farther. In place of the leathern band which binds the cap at the bottom, he substitutes one of black silk. He then adds a silken bow, to which he fastens the cap badge and a pair of "streamers," about eighteen inches in length, in place of the regulation ones of five and a half.

The kilted soldier's "fancy cap" is, when completed in all its glory, a thing that must be seen to be properly appreciated. Although strictly forbidden to alter any portion of his uniform without the previously obtained sanction of his Commanding-officer, a man seldom gets any article from the Quarter-master's stores without expending much labour, and often a considerable portion of his pay, in effecting what he considers an improvement in its style. If detected, he is punished, as his clothes, if they do not fit him to the satisfaction of the inspecting-officer, by whom all clothing issued from the regimental

FROM RÉVEILLE TO TATTOO

stores is examined before being sanctioned for wear, are sent to the regimental tailor's shop to be altered. All the same, a soldier has occasionally some reason for taking the law into his own hands in this matter, as the work in the tailor's shop is often scamped and turned out in a rather slovenly manner. Indeed, it is not very easy for a man with any regard to his appearance to look graceful and at his ease when clad in a strictly "regimental suit"—with a serge frock, forty-two inches round the chest, forty-six inches round the waist, and, perhaps, fifty inches round the skirt. Owing to the compression of this garment by a tight waist-belt, the skirts are apt to stick out very much *à la* crinoline, the whole producing in the eyes of the Army Clothing Department a singularly pleasing effect.

In barracks and on parade, however, a man always wears a strictly "regimental suit"—that is, with everything in all its pristine beauty; but when out of barracks and on furlough it is a very different case. Then it is that we see the recruit parading the streets of his native village, to the intense admiration of his brother-bumpkins—or if a cockney, to the envy of his "chummies"—in all the glory of a "fancy cap," with ribbons hanging over his shoulders to the second button of his manly chest, tight trousers of the much-prized "bell-bottom" type, and, above all, the cherished "quiff."

At half-past nine the bugler on duty sounds "the first post of tattoo." The Orderly-sergeants now go round to call the roll of their Companies, and to warn the necessary men for guard, picquet, or fatigue duty the next day. Any man who does not answer his name between this and ten o'clock is, unless he is in possession of a pass permitting him to stop out until midnight, or perhaps until *réveille* the next morning, reported absent on tattoo parade at ten o'clock. A quarter of an hour later "lights out" sounds, all gas-jets are extinguished, and the day's work is done.

Thus ends the work of the day, which cannot be said

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

to have been particularly laborious. The recruit has done about four hours' drill, the duty-man half that amount, or even less. In few other capacities would an unskilled workman get a day's pay and rations and lodging for doing so little. It would, I am inclined to think, be an excellent innovation if a soldier were required to do rather more work for an increased scale of pay and rations.

Under the present system he does, in the Infantry at any rate, just about as much as he is paid for.

CHAPTER VII

ON GUARD

As on more than one occasion lately reference has been made to guard-duty, a few explanatory remarks might be appropriately made upon the subject.

Military guards are of considerable antiquity, and their functions have remained practically unchanged since their inception. They vary slightly, however, according to the conditions under which the battalion performing them is serving at the time. The most usual purpose of a guard is to keep watch over (or, as the term implies, guard) government buildings, such as banks, arsenals, magazines, store-houses and prisons, &c. In the field the duties of sentries are chiefly to prevent the enemy from disturbing our forces under cover of darkness, and to secure for them what rest they can by their vigilance. This is effected by a chain of sentries which is placed all round the camp. Soldiers employed in this manner are said to be on "out-post duty."

Although there seems to be no immediate ground for imagining that an enemy will descend with evil designs upon our own peaceful shores, it is nevertheless considered as well to be prepared for this contingency. For this reason, and because of its immense importance when on service, guard-duty is still made a great feature of. In some garrisons, certainly, this is more the case than in others. Dublin, for instance, was, and still is, I hear, undoubtedly the military station with the heaviest guard-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

duty in the United Kingdom. Every day something like one hundred and forty men were required for this purpose. The Castle, the Bank of Ireland, and Mountjoy Convict Prison, had each a strong guard, while smaller ones were required at Richmond Tower, the Vice-regal Lodge, and the Military Hospital, &c. In addition to these, each battalion had also to find daily its own barrack or quarter-guard.

The guard duty of a garrison is apportioned among the various battalions stationed therein in accordance with their "nights-in-bed." This means that the men of each battalion available for duty are given, as far as possible, the same number of days'—or nights', rather—exemption from guard. When the system is properly worked it prevents one battalion being favoured at the expense of another. Yet the system seldom does work well, and the result is that complaints are rather frequent. The fact probably is that the correct apportioning of the duty necessitates such a complicated method of roster-keeping that the official—the garrison Sergeant-major as a rule—charged with this duty finds it a great deal more convenient to more or less arbitrarily detail for duty whom-ever he pleases.

However this might be, during my twelve months' service in Dublin the average number of "nights-in-bed" that I enjoyed was five. Sometimes it rose as high as seven, and at others it fell to three. The duty was always heavier in the winter season, when large numbers of men were absent on furlough, and in the early spring, when musketry and field-training were in force.

Shortly after I had completed three months' service the welcome intelligence was conveyed to me that I might henceforth regard myself as a duty-man. Although this dignity brought with it emancipation from the unpleasantnesses of recruit's drill, it also entailed responsibilities of its own. Chief among these was eligibility for guard-duty.

My *début* was at Mountjoy Prison. At half-past nine I

ON GUARD

paraded in marching order with the rest of the guard, which consisted of a Sergeant, Corporal, Lance-corporal, Bugler, and twenty-seven men, on the barrack-square. Here we were subjected to a most rigid inspection by the Adjutant. It is this officer's especial duty to closely inspect all armed parties before marching off. The utmost cleanliness is insisted upon, and any offence in the way of dirtiness or untidiness on guard-mounting parade is severely dealt with. Several hours of hard work have accordingly to be performed in pipe-claying pouches, rolling great coats, packing valises, and polishing brasswork before mounting for this duty.

A great incentive to turning out smartly on this parade is due to the fact that the cleanest man is selected by the Adjutant as Orderly for the day. As this duty is counted as a guard every one naturally tries to earn this coveted distinction. However, it generally falls to the more experienced men, as they easier acquire the knack of putting their equipment together in the neatest manner. Two or three extra men are warned daily, or "waiting guard," for the purpose of taking the place of this Orderly and of anybody else who, for any reason, does not go on the guard for which he has been detailed.

Ten rounds of ball-ammunition, with a couple of rounds of buck-shot to be used on emergency, were issued to each man before marching off. As a rule, ammunition is only provided for guards in special instances. The general routine for the daily guard-mounting parade would be to fall in about 9.30 A.M., when the arms and equipment of the men would be minutely examined. As soon as the inspection is over and the different guards formed up under their Commander, the word is given, and they march off to their destination. In Dublin the band of the battalion furnishing the Castle Guard always accompanied it to the Castle, when they played a short programme during the ceremony of changing the guard.

Mountjoy Prison was situated at a distance of about three miles from Richmond Barracks. After a little less

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

than an hour's marching we halted outside the great entrance-gates, and waited for them to open in response to the Sergeant's summons. A minute's delay ensued, and then a turning of keys and drawing back of bolts enabled us to enter within the prison walls.

As soon as the last man had crossed the threshold the gates were quickly shut and locked. The warder in charge then satisfied himself of our *bona fides*, and we made our way to the guard-room.

Here the Old Guard were up in readiness for our arrival. The ceremony of relieving them, which is carried out in this manner, then took place.

The Commander of the New Guard marches his men into such a position that they will, when halted, form into two ranks opposite the Old Guard. As soon as this has been accomplished to his satisfaction he issues his orders.

"New Guard! Open order—march!" (The rear rank step back to a distance of two extra paces from the front rank.) "Ranks, right dress! Eyes front!"

The Commander of the Old Guard then delivers himself.

"Old Guard! Present ar-r-ms!" At this the bugler sounds a salute.

"New Guard! Present ar-r-ms!" is the response, while the second bugler returns the salute in a similar manner.

"Old Guard! Shoulder arms!"

"New Guard! Shoulder arms!"

After this interchange of courtesies both Guards are prepared to "order" their "ar-r-ms," and the Old Guard stands at ease, while the new one is told off into relief by its Commander.

Sentry-duty is arranged by relief in this manner: The rule is that each man will do two hours' sentry-go and then have four hours' rest. For this reason three men are detailed for each post where a sentry is required; these relieve each other continuously every two hours. The effect of this is that out of twenty-four hours' guard-duty a man spends eight hours on sentry.

ON GUARD

My number on this occasion happened to be 15. A little calculation told me that as there were nine posts to be furnished with sentries I should be in the second relief and on No. 6 post. My tour of sentry-duty would, therefore, commence in about two hours' time, at 1 P.M., and would extend from 1-3 and 7-9 in the afternoon and evening, and again during the same hours in the early morning.

The first relief were marched into the guard-room in order to disencumber themselves of their packs—as sentry-duty is mercifully performed in the comparatively light equipment of waist-belt and pouch only. When this had been done they were marched off to their posts, under the Corporals, to take the places of the last relief of the Old Guard.

On arriving within a distance of ten paces from his post the new sentry is ordered to halt. The orders for the post are then given over by the old sentry to his relief. When "all correct" has been reported he relinquishes his post and sentry-box to him, and is marched back to join his guard.

When all the sentries have been relieved in this manner the Commander of the New Guard minutely examines the guard-room. The guard-report of the Old Guard is handed to him, and with the inventory contained therein he diligently compares all the utensils and articles of furniture on charge. It behoves him to be exceedingly particular about this duty, as he is personally liable for the cost of replacing any damaged articles which come to light during the examination of the Sergeant who will relieve him the next morning.

When the inventory has been carefully checked, and the breakages, &c., found to be duly entered, the prisoners, if any, are then handed over. If the Commander of the New Guard is satisfied that all is correct, he certifies to this effect by signing the guard-report. In doing this he is considered to have "taken over" the guard, and is, therefore, until relieved the following morning, solely

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

responsible for the carrying out of his duties. Any damage occurring to the guard-room property during his tour of duty is charged to him, unless he can satisfactorily trace it to anybody else.

When the old sentries have once more got into their equipment they fall in with their guard, which then marches away; the New Guard pay a last compliment by presenting arms, and the bugler sounds a final salute.

As soon as this had been done on this particular occasion we all went into the guard-room, and hanging up our valises, &c., got ready for sentry-go.

Guard-rooms are all very much alike, and a brief description of one will very well apply to another. In the room for the guard proper there are the usual barrack-room tables and forms, with cleaning utensils, &c. Accommodation for prisoners is provided by an inner room, which will hold a dozen or so, and also by three or four cells, for use when separate confinement is necessary. Guard-beds are provided in each for sleeping on at night. I use the word "sleep" advisedly, although this is about the last use that they can be put to. Anything more ill-adapted for the purpose it would be difficult to conceive. These beds are made of wood—of a particularly hard variety, it always seems to me—and are provided with a pillow of the same substance. The whole is fixed to one of the walls, occupying the enire length thereof, and thus forms a sloping shelf on which a dozen men can lie down at once. As they remain in use for a number of years they are nearly always, especially in the summer months, full of vermin.

As the men's rations have to be cooked on guard, a small oven is fitted to the fire and an iron cooking-pot is also provided. This pot is put to a variety of uses on guard. At dinner-time soup is made in it from bones and spare pieces of meat; in the afternoon it is used as a kettle for boiling tea in, and towards midnight its services are again requisitioned for preparing hot coffee.

ON GUARD

Consequently, by breakfast-time the next morning a peculiarly subtle flavour is imparted to the tea.

In the intervals between going on sentry the men are free to smoke, read, or play cards, as they like, but they must always be ready to obey the summons, "Guard, turn out!" For this reason they are never suffered to remove any portion of their equipment.

All Garrison Guards are visited by day and night by a Field-officer, who comes at uncertain hours to see that they are alert and vigilant, and to ascertain if the Commanders thereof have any report to make. At sunset, at 9.30 P.M., and at daybreak they also turn out for inspection under their N.C.O.s in charge.

At one o'clock it was time for my relief to go on sentry. After having been closely examined by the Sergeant we were marched off under a Corporal. On arriving at my post the orders were read over to me—in case I was unable to do this for myself, apparently—and, the old sentry having reported "all correct," the beat was surrendered to me.

At first the novelty of the situation helped the time to pass fairly well. My post was just outside one of the exercise rings, where a party of prisoners under the surveillance of a number of armed warders were pacing round and round like animals in a cage. My order-board, hanging from a nail in the sentry-box, contained a formidable list of instructions which I was responsible for duly observing. Among other duties was to immediately give the alarm—in precisely what manner it was not stated—should I discover any escape being made by a convict; to come to the assistance of warders when necessary; to take charge of all Government property in view of the post; and finally to keep a vigilant watch on the windows of the cells, &c. After a little, however, the time dragged very slowly, and when I had been posted for three-quarters of an hour it seemed that at least an hour and a half had elapsed since I left the guard-room. At length the approach of my relief told me that it was three

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

o'clock, and I, accordingly, handed over my beat to the new-comer with the greatest satisfaction to myself.

About half an hour afterwards the Field-officer of the day visited the guard. As soon as he had ridden away, there being nothing more to disturb us, tea was made. In the evening the men sat round the fire, or lay about on the guard-beds, until the time should come for them to again go on sentry. On returning to the guard-room at 9 P.M. after my second two hours of this duty I laid down and tried to get a little sleep. The result, however, was not very satisfactory, and at one o'clock in the morning I turned out again, every bone of my body aching from the hardness of my couch.

Slow as pass the hours on sentry by day, they cannot be compared with their leaden-footedness by night. The minutes appeared to literally crawl along, and it seemed as if three o'clock would never come. It was horribly cold, and although I tramped up and down until I was too tired to do so any longer I was nearly frozen. At the end of the first hour an almost overwhelming desire for sleep came upon me. Struggle against it as I would, it was as much as I could do to prevent myself from giving way to it. To those who have never tried it, to walk up and down a measured beat for a couple of hours at a time may seem a very simple thing, but let them try it in the dead of the night, on a lonely post with no company but their own thoughts, and they will very soon have a different opinion about it. I envied the prisoners in their cells ; they, at least, had ten hours' undisturbed rest, from 8 P.M. to 6 A.M. every day.

As the half-hours came round the stillness of the night was broken by the long-drawn cry, passed from sentry to sentry, "Number and al-l's we-ll!" by which evidence of their alertness was furnished to the Sergeant of the guard. If any one failed to take up the call he would be promptly visited by an N.C.O. and file of men, and the cause of his neglect ascertained.

Before being posted, each relief had been provided with

ON GUARD

the countersign and parole for their private information. I do not think that at this distant date it would be violating any confidence to state that on this particular occasion the former was *Hong Kong*, and the latter *Port Royal*. My orders were to challenge and demand the countersign from all persons approaching the post between retreat and *réveille*. Although a sentry would have been justified in shooting any person who failed to give the countersign when challenged, less extreme measures are usually resorted to. The prison officials and warders had all been acquainted with the pass-word, and duly gave it whenever I challenged them as they passed me on their rounds.

As a neighbouring clock struck three the welcome sound of approaching footsteps broke upon my ear.

"Halt! Who comes there?" I demanded.

"Relief!" was the answer.

"Stand, Relief! Advance one, and give the countersign!"

The Corporal advanced, and exclaimed softly—for it does not do to impart the information too loudly—" *Hong Kong*."

"Advance, Relief! All's well."

After a hurried wash and shave, the next morning, I completed my tour of sentry-go with another two hours' duty from seven to nine. On its conclusion, I made a hasty breakfast off some bread and tea that had been set aside for my relief and assisted to clean up the guard-room. About half-past ten the New Guard was reported in sight, and half an hour afterwards we were once more outside the gates and on our way to barracks. My first guard in Dublin was now ended.

CHAPTER VIII

SUNDAY IN BARRACKS

As may well be imagined, the routine of a Sunday in barracks is very different to that which marks the remaining days of the week. And yet there are many points in it that are common to both: the same guards, picquet, and fatigue duties have to be found; the Orderly-officer inquires as usual if there are "any complaints?" and the bugler brays at frequent intervals from morning till night and in the old familiar way. The chief points of difference between the observance of Sunday and that of Monday are that on the former day there is no "office-hour" for the transaction of Orderly-room business and there are also no drill-parades held. Church-parades take their place, and the Colonel hands over the reins to the chaplain.

In the British Army the officially-recognised religious persuasions are four in number—Church of England, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian. As may be expected, of these faiths the former is preferred by the majority of the rank and file. Save in Scotch regiments, Presbyterianism has but few adherents. A recruit, on joining the Army, must acknowledge one or other of the foregoing denominations ere the completion of his enlistment is effected. No matter if he privately incline to the faith of the Plymouth Brethren, has been brought up in the tenets of the Seventh Day Independents, or has,

SUNDAY IN BARRACKS

perchance, a leaning to the faith of a Fire Worshipper, Mahommedan, or Methodist, he must, on his attestation, profess one or other of the "recognised persuasions."

There is a story—probably apocryphal, by the way—of a certain Sergeant-major who was ordered by the Adjutant to ascertain the religious denominations of a draft of recruits on the first Sunday after their arrival at the dépôt. This the warrior proceeded to do in this manner. Drawing up his squad he issued his instructions: "Squad! 'shun! When I say, 'Fall in,' Church of England men fall in on the right, Roman Catholics on the left, all fancy religions in rear!"

There are a good many men in the Service who profess "fancy religions." There are Church of England men and Roman Catholics, Methodists and members of the Salvation Army, followers of Wesley, and followers of nothing at all. Wesleyans, Methodists, and Baptists, with members of what are somewhat euphemistically termed "other denominations," are comprehensively classed under the head of "the Wesleyan, or Chapel, party."

At one time there was not so much choice in the matter of spiritual consolation as is at present the case, and the men were compelled to acknowledge either the Established or the Roman Catholic Church. Nowadays a more tolerant tendency prevails, and inability to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles is no longer considered an insuperable objection to a candidate for the profession of arms. As far as this goes, I think that the average soldier himself is quite ready to meet the authorities more than half-way, and will willingly sign anything put in his way, if given the means for so doing. I must not omit to mention that the Jewish persuasion has lately been formally recognised, and its adherents are afforded every opportunity of conforming to the doctrines of their faith.

To minister to the spiritual requirements of these various creeds a corps of Chaplains has been instituted. At their head is a Chaplain-general, occupying a responsible position at the War Office. The official designation of a clergyman

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

serving with the troops is "Chaplain to the Forces." The soldier, however, has bestowed on him the generic sobriquet of "Sky Pilot." Those who are members of the Established, Roman Catholic, or Presbyterian Churches receive commissions on appointment and have the status of officers, ranking as Captains, Majors, Lieutenant-colonels, and Colonels, according to seniority. The members of these three classes number between eighty and one hundred. The Wesleyans prefer not to hold commissions.

As a rule chaplains dress as clergymen, but abroad uniform is more generally worn. In war-paint they present a somewhat peculiar appearance. "The customary suit of solemn black" gives place, for the nonce, to a be-frogged and braided patrol-jacket, or frock-coat, a peaked cap, or helmet, adorned with a Maltese cross, and black trousers. The *tout ensemble* is certainly striking.

Although not too hardly worked, the British Army chaplain always conscientiously earns his pay, which ranges, according to his rank and length of service, from £182 10s. to £410 12s. 6d. per annum. He is also provided with free quarters, fuel, and light, or an allowance in lieu thereof. On the completion of twenty years' service he retires on the pension of an officer of his relative combatant rank.

His work consists, broadly, in the officiating at divine service in the church or chapel attended by the troops under his spiritual charge. This he does twice every Sunday; in the morning, at the parade service, and in the evening, at the voluntary one. He is also required to attend to the superintendence of a Sunday School, and to the religious instruction, twice a week, of the married soldiers' children. Other duties are the frequent visiting of the military prisons, hospitals, and married quarters, &c., in the garrison. I can well understand that chaplains feel a certain diffidence about visiting barrack-rooms—thinking, perhaps, that, in doing so, they would be unduly

SUNDAY IN BARRACKS

intruding—and it is for this reason, I suppose, that they so seldom enter into such places.

In addition to the above calls on his time, he has to officiate at all christenings, marriages, and funerals, relating to members of his flock. In large garrisons such episodes are of fairly frequent occurrence, and have to be conducted without any extra fee.

Yet these members of the Church Militant are generally in a vastly superior position to their over-worked, harassed, and often poverty-stricken brethren who labour in the uncongenial surroundings of great towns and cities. Parochial work, with all its kindred worries and anxieties, is, to the Army chaplain, quite unknown. His income is his own, and cannot decrease with the depreciation of a "living," nor is it subjected to the drain of constant advances to impecunious parishioners, for the very good reason that he cannot be said to have any parishioners, in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word, at all. In point of work, too, he seems to have a fairly easy time of it. Beyond the two services on Sundays, and the usual Church Festivals, his time is to a great extent very much his own. In places where there are three or four chaplains to share the extraneous work, such duties as visiting the sick, &c., do not press very heavily. In fact, in many stations the chaplain's proficiency at tennis is uncharitably ascribed to his having such ample opportunities for practice!

Nevertheless, despite these many solid and substantial advantages, Army chaplains have what must, to an ambitious man, be a very serious drawback to cope with. It is that, beyond a certain point, they have no prospect of further promotion. A "first-class" chaplain draws, one way and another, about £500 per annum, but he can never become a bishop, or even a minor dignitary of the Church. While every curate carries a prospective apostolic staff in his sermon bag, a country rector, when he has retired on his pension with twenty years' service, is the utmost that the military chaplain can hope for.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

And without considerable interest he will not be able to obtain this.

In addition to the professional ministrations of his chaplain the British soldier seems to be the object of much attention on the part of the officials of such *quasi*-religious institutions as Soldiers' Homes, &c. These, as a rule, are maintained by the exertions of well-meaning maiden ladies, who fondly imagine that they make a convert every time a soldier purchases a cup of coffee at these establishments. Credit, however, must certainly be given them for not avoiding barrack-rooms (to the extent that the chaplains do) and for seeking their patrons on their own ground.

It is a mistake to assume that soldiers, as a body, are entirely irreligious. True, they are not all Hope Grant's or Hedley Vicar's, and Cromwell's Ironsides have long since had their day. In these matters they can be led, but not driven. They strongly dislike "having religion rammed into them," as they forcibly put it, and loathe with heart and soul the Church parade on Sunday mornings. It is not the service that is considered so obnoxious, but the compulsory attendance thereat. In proof of this, a considerable number of soldiers will often be seen among the congregation at evening service.

Nor is their behaviour on such occasions anything but strictly decorous. They seem to regard participation in the choral portions of the service as a solemn duty, and in the hymns, especially, do they testify to the possession of powerful lungs. Perhaps a trooper may occasionally go to sleep during the sermon, but this may surely be forgiven him. At any rate, he makes a point of never omitting to give something to the offertory. To this he contributes on principle, although he is not always entirely convinced of the desirability of supporting the object to which the funds are to be devoted. On the subject of foreign missions, for instance, the man who has been abroad is apt to hold views peculiarly his own.

SUNDAY IN BARRACKS

At the Church of England parade the services of the band are requisitioned. While the troops are forming up and waiting to move off they play the "Church call," followed by a hymn or two. When the parade is ready to start they form up at the head of the column and play a succession of more lively airs until the church door is reached. In the building itself the bandsmen and drummers form the choir, and the reed players, with three or four horns, &c., take the place of the organ. A band in church has certainly rather a fine effect, and is evidently a great attraction to civilians, who always eagerly throng the seats allotted to them in military chapels.

When the service is over and the troops have marched back to barracks the remainder of the day is at their own disposal. A considerable number devote it to visiting their friends in town, &c. On fine Sunday afternoons the streets in the vicinity of barracks are always more or less thronged by soldiers and their friends of the opposite sex, who muster in force outside the gates, waiting for the appearance of their swains at two P.M. prompt.

In the barracks there is not much going on. The Canteen is closed for the greater part of the afternoon, but makes up for it by doing a roaring trade at night. The injunction that one shall labour for six days only is not very strictly observed in the Service. As Monday is almost invariably set apart for a route-march or field day, preparations for it, involving some hours' work, have to be made on the day before. On Sunday evenings, therefore, there is always a vast amount of rolling great-coats, putting equipment together, and cleaning arms, &c., going on in the barrack-rooms. The usual tattoo roll-call, followed at 10.15 by "lights out," ends the day.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY

CHRISTMAS time was now fast approaching, and, towards its correct and befitting celebration, for weeks beforehand much anxious thought and labour had been expended. As rumours that, owing to our speedy departure for foreign service, this would be our last Christmas for several years in England, were just now floating about, it was felt that special efforts should be made to duly mark this festival.

Whether the accumulated cash in hand for decorative purposes should be devoted to the making of those graceful paper festoons and chains which, in barrack-rooms, are evidently considered to be the acme of good taste and high art, or whether the rival claims of certain highly coloured and gorgeously framed chromos with appropriate references to the season should receive prior consideration, was a matter of the gravest import. This, be it known, was in virtue of the fact that the Colonel had announced his intention of giving a prize of a sovereign to the men of that room which he considered to be the best decorated. After a good deal of discussion the momentous question was finally settled by effecting a compromise, with the result that each item was duly represented. In addition to this a large amount of the time-honoured holly and mistletoe, together with a vast quantity of evergreens, was utilised in the adornment of the rooms.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY

The decorative scheme was chiefly carried out in this manner :—The gas brackets, pipes, &c., were covered with holly and evergreens. At intervals round the walls were hung a number of chastely designed chromos, selected by the Decoration Committee apparently on account of the distinctly liberal amount of colour provided in return for their cost. The frames of these gems were then surrounded with holly, in a manner which was unanimously felt to set off their merits to the greatest advantage.

Over the fireplace—in the place of honour—was the *chef d'œuvre*—the work of an ambitious young Lance-corporal—a long strip of cardboard covered with red cloth, on which was emblazoned in letters of blue and yellow the legend “A Merry Christmas.” This was thought to be particularly neat and original; in fact, without a device of this sort no decoration is complete. From the four corners of the room, to the gas-bracket in the centre, hung paper festoons, fashioned with great ingenuity out of variously coloured tissue-papers. The effect of the whole was certainly “Christmassy” enough, although the colour-scheme was, perhaps, a little startling.

Such then is the manner in which the British Infantryman decorates, at this festive season, his barrack-room. Indeed, it may be said that it is the manner in which all barrack-rooms are adorned, for soldiers of all branches are very conservative in this matter, and, adhering staunchly to the tradition of bygone ages, fiercely resent any attempts at innovation. If one were at Christmas time to visit half a dozen different barracks, occupied respectively by Cavalry, Infantry, and Artillery, the “decorations” of each would be found to be precisely similar.

Although on this day *réveille* did not sound until 6.45 A.M. the indulgence was taken little advantage of, and the men were up betimes for the purpose of wishing their neighbours the Compliments of the Season. Peace and goodwill now reigned. An amnesty had been proclaimed.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

Old feuds, of long standing, were, for the nonce, annulled (in all probability to be renewed with increased bitterness on the next day) and old friendships cemented. The defaulters had been liberated in commemoration of the occasion, the bonds of discipline were perceptibly slackened, and breaches thereof openly winked at.

The only fatigue-duties on this day were chiefly voluntary ones, such as decorating the church (for which the men were recompensed by the chaplain) and assisting in the cook-house, &c. All guards, with the exception of the regimental barrack-guard, were found by a Scotch regiment, which conveniently happened to be quartered in Dublin at the time. The Highlanders, it should be explained, affect to disdain our southern weakness for Christmas, but atone for their austerity to a considerable extent on the occasion of New Year's Day.

Church Parade was at ten o'clock, and was, for once in a way, willingly attended. The service was a short one, and the Christmas hymns were heartily sung. In the same way, Chaplain's sermon was listened to with a good grace, although some of the younger members of his congregation had great difficulty in restraining their evident anxiety to return to barracks for the event of the day—the dinner.

At the conclusion of the service the troops returned to their quarters and settled down to enjoy themselves to the best of their ability. Despite the fact that many men were absent, some on furlough and others "on pass," spending the day with their civilian friends, a fair number were left in barracks to do justice to the good things provided for their consumption.

It was now about half past eleven, and active preparations were in progress for that important function, the Christmas dinner—the subject of the recruits' dreams for months past. In my Company, about seventy men, including N.C.O.s under the rank of Sergeant, sat down to the banquet.

A soldier's Christmas dinner is, be it known, a solid

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY

and substantial affair, and costs a considerable amount of money. The expenses incurred thereby are chiefly met by a grant from the Canteen funds—that is, from the profits accumulated by the institution during the preceding twelve months ; fortunately, the fund has usually an uncommonly broad back, and is therefore able at this season to launch out to the extent of at least a shilling per man. The officers also subscribe liberally, giving, as a rule, the same amount to each member of their Company in barracks at dinner-time. In addition to these sources, many of the tradesmen who cater for the battalion send in presents of turkeys, geese, plum puddings, &c. The brewers follow suit with liquid refreshment, and altogether there is no lack of good cheer.

The civilian reader may very well be surprised at the quantity of beer provided on these occasions. This is practically unlimited, although the allowance is supposed not to exceed one gallon per man—a fairly liberal allowance, by the way. Nor are the teetotalers forgotten ; dozens upon dozens of inspiring ginger-pop, sparkling lemonade, and other strange brews being provided for their benefit. For the more solid portions of the feast, in addition to the usual issue of ration meat, there are plenty of turkeys, geese, hams, &c., with a large supply of pickles, cheese, fruit, &c.

A feature of the banquet is, of course, the plum pudding. This masterpiece is known in the Army by the expressive title of “duff.” Its recipe is wrapped in a profound mystery, and towards its preparation the military cooks maintain great reserve. To add a piquancy to its flavour, the flour, suet, currants, raisins, and other ingredients composing it are always mixed with porter or stout. When boiled, these delicacies weigh several pounds apiece, and in appearance strongly resemble ancient round-shot, for which, at a pinch, they would probably afford a fair substitute.

While dinner was in progress, the Colonel, accompanied by the other officers, visited the different rooms in turn.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

At each he enthusiastically praised the decorations, systematically declaring that they were the best he had yet seen, and, at the request of the oldest soldier present, drank to the health of the occupants thereof. When one considers the number of rooms which he has to visit (in each of which the same ceremony is gone through) one feels inclined to pity him.

Very soon dinner was in full swing, and, with the withdrawal of the officers, all restraint seemed to vanish. Beer has a marvellous effect in loosening tongues, and although there was not much speech-making (or "tongue-wagging" as soldiers term it) songs and toasts were very numerous. These latter were extremely comprehensive; indeed, at these times the soldier has a mania for honouring somebody's health. As to precisely whose, he is not at all particular, evidently being of opinion "the more the merrier." Everybody's health was drunk—that of the cook with honours, as befitted his exertions. Then came that of the Orderly-man, followed by those of his assistants.

All this involved much talking, which, as every one knows, is dry work. This was naturally felt to be a condition of things that could only be remedied by a vigorous sampling of the contents of the beer barrels. Accordingly this was promptly done, and with such vigour that very soon some of the younger warriors succumbed to the potent influence of unlimited libations and finished the afternoon in blissful repose under the table. As soon as the meal was over a number of civilian friends of the men were permitted to come into barracks. The natural result was that the different rooms, like the majority of their occupants, soon became uncomfortably full.

At Christmas time I have known Colour-sergeants, after sending in a couple of barrels of beer, to lock the door of the room in which the dinner is taking place, and then go out to enjoy the remainder of the day in their own manner, happy in the consciousness that their men cannot very well come to much harm, and are at all events

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY

restrained from committing any very open breaches of discipline. Although such measures may seem somewhat autocratic, they are by no means so unsatisfactory in their results as might be imagined.

Towards evening most of those who were sufficiently recovered from the effects of their potations (together with many who were not) sought the attractions of the town. This meant making, in company with other kindred spirits, a round of the various public-houses, and winding up with a visit to a theatre or music-hall. Then, with supper at an eating-house, they would put a finishing touch to the enjoyment of the day.

Such praiseworthy proceedings, however, have not unfrequently another termination. Overcome by the unusual indulgence in practically unlimited liquor, some of the more rowdily inclined are almost certain to fall foul of the military police or picquets who are patrolling the streets. The result is that the remainder of the night is spent in the seclusion of the nearest guard-room. The following day they are awarded by an irate Commanding-officer, who but yesterday was all smiles and graciousness, with various terms of "confinement to barracks," imprisonment in the provost cells, or, perhaps, even a court-martial.

It is, however, chiefly the less-experienced soldiers and raw recruits who come to grief on these occasions. Young fellows, many of them little more than mere boys, seem to think it to be the correct thing, in order to display their "manliness," to indulge in an abnormal amount of liquor at Christmas time. This proceeding always makes them desperately sick and uncomfortable for days afterwards. Under the influence of the unaccustomed libation they are easily induced by a certain class of men, who ever regard the recruit as fair prey, to join their party and "make a night of it."

Unfortunately, in too many cases they regret it very considerably the next morning, when they wake up in a guard-room, with a splitting headache and an extremely

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

hazy impression as to how they spent the previous evening. In response to their anxious inquiries the information is gleefully imparted to them by the Sergeant of the Guard that "there is a stiff charge against them from the military police."

The unhappy "rook" (the generic term for recruits) thereupon conjures up visions of all sorts of misdeeds committed under the influence of the previous night's indulgence, ranging from murder to highway robbery. However, he is presently immensely relieved to learn, when the Sergeant condescends to enter into particulars as to the nature of the indictment preferred against him, that he is "in for drunk and absence." On this charge he is accordingly at "office-hour" arraigned before his Colonel, who sits in judgment in the Orderly-room. This being perhaps his first offence, the Commanding-officer takes the fact into consideration and is inclined to be lenient. Very possibly an admonition merely is held to adequately meet the case, and he is sent away, to his intense relief, with a firm resolve for the future to shun the insidious attractions of the flowing bowl.

Although it is usually the youngsters who come to grief at this season, I have, nevertheless, known old soldiers—men who had earned a reputation for steadiness—to "break out" in an unwarrantable manner at Christmas time. Regarding it as a serious and solemn trust, they will systematically save up their pay for weeks beforehand, in order to celebrate the great day by a "good booze." Although a good deal of licence is permitted on this occasion, there is a limit to all things. The natural consequences of this questionable conduct are, as may be imagined, most disastrous, and are bound to entail fines for drunkenness, and the consequent loss of good-conduct badges, if nothing worse.

The teetotalers, of whom there were a fair number in the battalion, and those men who could find other pleasures than those of the beer barrel, spent the evening with their

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY

friends in town, or perhaps with similarly inclined comrades in neighbouring barracks.

The authorities are always liberal in granting all night "passes," available until *réveille* the next morning to enable men to spend the night out of barracks. It is also a by no means difficult matter to obtain a few days' leave at Christmas. In addition to this, furloughs for a month (extended to six weeks to men living in Scotland or Ireland) are granted to those who like to take advantage of them. The conditions demanded of would-be participants of this indulgence are that the applicants are of good character, are in possession of a complete kit, and are not in debt.

These requirements are easily fulfilled. The result is that, during the furlough season (November to March) many a jovial trooper may be seen, with a month's advance of pay in his pocket, once more experiencing the delights of existence in his native village. Here he patronises with ineffable condescension his erstwhile "chummies," who now enviously regard him as a being of superior clay. In the cosy tap-room of some favourite pub they cluster admiringly round him, while he discourses on "the Advantages of the Army," often, it must be confessed, very considerably drawing the long bow in the process. Nevertheless, he unconsciously acts as an excellent recruiting agent, which fact, I am inclined to think, is not altogether unconnected with the liberality of the authorities in granting, with so free a hand, these annual furloughs.

The average soldier on furlough is very different from the same man in barracks. Removed from the surroundings of his regiment, where almost every second man, by virtue of his position, exacts obedience from him, he now comes out in a different light. In the more congenial surroundings of his native streets, he is now, in the eyes of his old companions, quite "cock of the walk." And this he takes care to let them know, as he proudly struts about, fully conscious of his superiority as a

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

"Service Man!" No wonder that recruiting is always brisk during these months.

However, it is not here my province to write of furloughs, and, in doing so, I am digressing. My object has been to give the reader some ideas of how Christmas Day is spent in the Army. The conclusion that the festival is by no means devoid of special preparations and attractions of its own will, I think, be arrived at.

Notwithstanding all that is done in this respect, I am, nevertheless, strongly of opinion that a much greater return might be made for the amount of money expended. There is far too much extravagance with regard to the dinner, on which it is by no means unusual to lay out, for eighty men, from ten to fifteen pounds. This is a great deal too much; six or seven pounds should be ample. Again, there is too much prodigality in respect of the quantity of provisions purchased. About half the amount provided is wasted; in fact, a great deal too much of everything is ordered, and an unnecessary amount is spent on "the decorations," while the mysterious item "sundries" too often absorbs any surplus.

If the money were put into the hands of a refreshment contractor I am confident that a far more satisfactory return would be effected. But this is contrary to the regulations, which sapiently decree that "all groceries" (N.B. turkeys are "groceries" within the meaning of the Act) "for the use of troops shall be purchased through the Canteen." This means that, instead of obtaining what is required from a large caterer or wholesale man, and thereby obtaining a discount for ready-money on a large order, the goods have to be purchased, in the first instance, by the Canteen, and, through this institution, retailed to Companies. By this ingenious arrangement both the Canteen and the contractor make a profit, and a consequent increase in the price of the goods before the men receive them is necessitated. This, of course, may commend itself to the interested parties, but to those who have to bear the increased expense thereby en-

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE ARMY

tailed it appears to be somewhat contrary to a spirit of commercial enterprise. At least, this is how it always struck me.

There is little more to be said. The soldier evidently firmly believes in the advisability of making the most of a good thing, and on the occurrence of the Christmas "Beano" he does so, after his own peculiar manner, with a vengeance. The prodigal expenditure, the lavish hospitality displayed, and the good-fellowship prevailing on the occasion all combine to make the day a red letter one throughout the Army.

As for myself, I withdrew from the dinner table about the time that beer as a substitute for gravy was being poured over the goose, and sought relaxation in the town. Having a very good idea of the probable condition of the room at night I availed myself of a "pass," and slept at a quiet hotel, returning to barracks about half-past six the next morning.

CHAPTER X

AT THE CURRAGH

AT the beginning of the following January an order was promulgated for the Fusiliers to "take over" Wellington Barracks in relief of the —nd Regiment, who were leaving the garrison.

The move was not an altogether advantageous one. Our new quarters, although rather nearer the heart of the city, were at a considerable distance from the Park. As we had to go there at least three times a week for drill and field-days, this was a consideration. Again, while Richmond Barracks were scarcely palatial, they certainly provided better accommodation than did those to which we were to be transferred. The building had originally been a prison, but had afterwards been converted into military barracks by the simple expedient of knocking down the partitions between cells, and thus forming barrack-rooms. Many of the old blocks had not been altered at all, and were used as store-rooms, &c.

Scarcely had we been settled down in our new surroundings for a week when instructions were issued from headquarters for the musketry training of all recruits to be commenced forthwith. As this was to take place at the Curragh we had to make preparations for another move.

About two days later I found myself, with a party of about sixty others—all of the "last draft"—parading on the

AT THE CURRAGH

square in full marching order. All our worldly possessions that were not carried in the valises on our backs were placed in canvas kit-bags, and conveyed in baggage-waggons.

At the station I made my first acquaintance with the manner in which Her Majesty's troops travel by train, and was not altogether favourably impressed thereby. However, as the journey before us was not one of very long duration, the cramming of sixteen warriors into compartments built for ten travellers scarcely mattered.

On arrival at Newbridge we left the train, and finished the journey to the Camp on foot. Although "marching order" is not an ideal form of equipment for pedestrian exercise, the latter part of our journey was decidedly preferable to the former.

The Curragh Camp is situated on the top of a hill, or, rather, of several, in County Kildare. At the time at which I write the troops were housed either in wooden huts or else under canvas. Stone barracks were then being built, but they could only at that period accommodate a single battalion. The Camp is modelled very much after the better-known ones at Aldershot and Colchester, and is the great school of practical instruction for all the troops in Ireland—Cavalry, Artillery, and Infantry, with detachments of the various Departmental Corps from the garrison, which is, accordingly, constantly subjected to changes. As a military station the Curragh is not popular, for battalions are sent there for work, and a drill season there, with its ceaseless round of route-marches and field-days, is a severe purgatory after the gaieties of garrison towns like Dublin, Belfast, and Cork.

Our destination was "M" Lines, and four huts near the hospital were to be our resting-place for the next couple of months. Externally, these Curragh huts were not things of beauty, and internally they were about as unsuitable for living in as could well be imagined. From their great age—they dated from the Crimea, or from some even more remote period—the wooden planks form-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

ing the walls fitted so badly that at night the unfortunate occupants were half frozen. Winter in one of these huts is a terrible trial for any but troops who have just returned from a tour of duty in Halifax. They had no fire-places, but were provided instead with rickety stoves. Peat was the only fuel issued, and the allowance of this was very sparing. At night the rooms were filled with an evil-smelling smoke, which the zephyrs that whistled through the numerous holes in the walls that answered for chimneys distributed in all directions. Everything was in a most dilapidated condition, and I often wondered that our bungalows were not blown over altogether during the furious gales that prevailed during the winter.

While on the subject of fuel it might, perhaps, be as well to here make a remark about the supply thereof. Coal is only served out in barrack-rooms from the end of October to the following March. The weekly allowance commences at 80 lb., and reaches a maximum during December and January of a little over 2 cwt. This amount, even when most economically treated—all ashes being carefully preserved, &c.—only lasts at the most for four days, and often the coal-box is empty in three. As a consequence the men club together to buy extra fuel. This in a room containing about fifteen occupants would cost them twopence a-piece weekly.

The quality of the coal issued is not of the best, and a good deal of it is simply fire-proof. As a heat-producer, a composition largely made up of lumps of slate is seldom a success. With the exception of those in Gibraltar, all the barracks in which I have been stationed in abroad were not provided with fire-places at all; thus the difficulty of maintaining an efficient coal supply was completely circumvented.

With the question of fuel may be considered that of light. Gas is provided in most barrack-rooms; as a rule, two brackets in each supply the illumination. The quality of the gas is often very poor, but this is frequently largely owing to the defective and antiquated burners in use. If

AT THE CURRAGH

one has to do any work in a barrack-room at night it is necessary to provide one's self with a candle or lamp.

For the first two or three days after our arrival at the Curragh we were initiated into the mysteries of "preliminary drill," with the object of making our performances on the range more deadly. Lectures on the "theoretical principles of musketry" were delivered daily by the officers who accompanied us, and were rather interesting to those who were able to follow them. Many of the men, however, found the constant reference to such subjects as "trajectories," "lines of fire," "culminating points," &c., a little beyond them. Consequently, as far as they were concerned, these lectures were not provocative of much good.

In view of the fact that an ounce of practice is rightly held at a higher value than is a ton of theory, we were taken down to the range at the earliest opportunity. Here it became apparent that, despite the careful preliminary instruction which had been given them, many of the party possessed but the most elementary ideas regarding the proper use of their rifles. It was a constant source of surprise to me when I saw a recruit calmly walking about with a loaded rifle, or sitting on an ammunition-box with a lighted pipe in his mouth, that no accident occurred. Probably the Providence who watches over drunkards and fools keeps a watchful eye on recruits at musketry.

In about three weeks' time (during which period we lost several days on account of wet weather) the course was finished, and, to my great satisfaction, I achieved the distinction of being returned as a "first-class shot." The highest musketry classification obtainable is that of "marksman," after which come, in order of merit, those of first, second, and third class. The "marksmen," in token of their prowess, are entitled to wear a badge of two crossed rifles on their left arms.

The Curragh is not a lively place at which to be stationed, and our detachment soon grew very tired of

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

it. On several occasions I procured a pass and went into Dublin until the following Monday morning. On these occasions I used to sleep either at Wellington or else (a course that I found infinitely more pleasant) at a quiet hotel. It was the greatest relief imaginable to get away, if for a few hours only, from my surroundings. Those who have not actively experienced what a barrack-room, crowded with noisy, foul-mouthed, and more or less drunken, men, means at night cannot conceive what a man who is in the slightest degree sensitive feels at such times. The utter loneliness, engendered by his inability to "muck in" with his companions, is unspeakable. The total cessation, for but the briefest interval, of the foul language of the barrack-room (which, until he becomes happily hardened to it, grates so horribly on the ear of the better class of recruit) seems the greatest bliss.

At the Camp there was a fairly comfortable Soldiers' Home, where the more quietly disposed men were in the habit of spending their evenings. Here I often used to go for a couple of hours at night, in order to get away for a little time from my hut. The institution, although one of the best of its class that I have ever seen, was capable of many improvements in its management.

There was a comfortably furnished reading-room in the building, which proved a great boon, although the most innocent description of popular literature was rigorously tabooed therefrom. Sporting papers were here naturally considered *anathema maranatha*, and even *Punch* was felt to be less helpful in its tendency than the committee would have wished. Cards were not mentioned within the precincts of the institution, and a billiard-table was held to be a sure and certain road to perdition for those who habitually made use thereof; bagatelle, however, might be indulged in without unduly imperilling one's future.

The great drawback to the achieving of success by these institutions lies in the fact that the religious element

AT THE CURRAGH

is permitted to unduly intrude itself in their management. Soldiers' Homes should, it seems to me, be conducted as clubs rather than as places of worship; until this becomes the case the great majority of the men for whom they are primarily intended will strenuously avoid them. Too often, however, the well-meaning, although sadly over-zealous, committees thereof ignore this obvious truth, and drive would-be new-comers from the fold by their ill-advised solicitation to them to take part in "knee-drill." Should a fresh arrival enter the reading-room to have a look at the evening paper he will certainly be made welcome. He will also have a tract pressed upon him. The natural consequence is that he departs in wrath and straightway enters upon the broad path that leads to the nearest canteen.

I must confess that I used to rather abuse the hospitality of "Curragh Home" by surreptitiously taking a novel there and spending an hour or two in a comfortable arm-chair with my pipe. It was rather a nuisance certainly, until one got used to it, to hear in an adjoining room the strains of a wheezy harmonium, to the accompaniment of which a number of the chosen were lustily vociferating their orthodoxy. My only excuse is that my barrack-room was so unpleasant at night and I had not yet become so inured to it as was the case later on. Still, I kept on very good terms with the superintendent, who invariably treated all comers with the utmost consideration.

Although a soldier is never really persecuted in any way for his religious tendencies, he is always rather despised for making a display of them. This is often entirely his own fault. If he would only prove himself to his comrades to be as good as themselves at "soldiering"—*i.e.*, smart and clean in appearance and good at drill, &c.—his religious observances would be held by them to be entirely his own affair. Unfortunately, this is seldom the case, and the "psalm-singers" of a battalion are too often more renowned for their proficiency in "knee-drill" than in their more strictly military exercises. The most

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

blackguardly canteen loafer is often their superior in these respects.

On our return to Dublin at the end of this month I was extremely glad to find that there were several men in my new room who, in the language of the street preacher, had "got salvation." Their influence was certainly a good one, and checked in some measure the usual flow of filthy language. Those whose religion was something more than a veneer did a great deal of good by the sheer force of their example.

CHAPTER XI

ON ESCORT DUTY

A FRESH experience was now in store for me. A week or so after my return to Wellington, a Corporal, with whom I had struck up rather a friendship, informed me that he had been detailed to go on escort duty, to fetch a deserter—a man belonging to my own barrack-room, by the way—from Lancaster. He told me that he could select whom he liked to act as escort, and asked me if I would like to accompany him. Naturally, I jumped at his offer, and having obtained from the Sergeant-major the necessary permission, made my preparations for the journey.

Our second battalion being, at this time, quartered in Bermuda, strong drafts were periodically required to reinforce its ranks, which were continually being depleted by the transfer of numbers of men, either on account of their being invalided, or else having completed their service. Among those warned for the various drafts were always a certain proportion of men who had a great aversion to being stationed there. Appeal against the decision of the authorities was never of the slightest use. If a man's name was included in the list of those available for a draft, and he was pronounced medically fit to accompany it, nothing could prevent his going whether he liked it or not, and to save trouble he would not, as a rule, be consulted.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

Previous to their embarkation the men would always be given a furlough, to take leave of their friends. The natural consequence of this liberality was that it was frequently abused by one or more to whom it had been extended, taking the opportunity thus offered to neglect to return to their battalion. After five days of such absence a man is proclaimed as a deserter, and some one else has to accompany the draft in his place.

It was for the receiving into custody of a man who had distinguished himself in this way, but had managed to get detected and stopped at Lancaster, that the escort was now required.

Accordingly, Corporal Warrender and I went down to the docks that evening and took steamer for Morecambe. Warrender was provided with several official documents, in the way of travelling warrants, railway passes, and billeting demands, &c. We both took our rifles, and I was also furnished with a pair of handcuffs, for the safer custody of our captive.

We were the only passengers on board, and consequently secured the best sleeping accommodation to be had. After a fairly rough night, during which we were both somewhat uncomfortable, the steamer came to anchor off Morecambe Bay in the early morning.

On inquiry at the railway station, we found that we could not get a train for Lancaster until the evening. We therefore resolved to put up at some hotel for the day, and, producing our papers, called upon the landlord to supply us with refreshments. The proprietor did not seem too pleased to see us, which I considered very natural when I learned that he was compelled to provide us with a hot meal for a most infinitesimal sum. When Cavalry are on the march Boniface will do almost anything to avoid having the men and horses billeted upon him.

In the afternoon we left Morecambe, and went on by train to Lancaster. On arriving here we made our way, in accordance with the instructions contained in our

ON ESCORT DUTY

"route," to the barracks. Here the Corporal reported our arrival to the Sergeant-major of the battalion quartered there, who directed us to a barrack-room. We were given some supper and provided beds, and made as comfortable as circumstances would permit. Being exceedingly tired with my recent travelling I soon fell asleep.

After breakfast the next morning we set out for the civil prison, to which our delinquent had been committed by a magistrate pending the arrival of an escort.

At the gaol we were received by the Governor, to whom Corporal Warrender handed a document demanding him "to deliver into the custody of the escort producing this authority, No. —, Private Wm. Geo. Smith, 1st Batt. North Blankshire Fusiliers, now in your custody as a deserter, by order of R. M. Douglas, Lieut.-Col., the said prisoner's Commanding-officer."

This order having been carefully scrutinised and pronounced to be in due form, we were told to accompany a warder into a corridor. Here, standing in line against the doors of the cells, were a dozen or so men, participating in the enforced hospitality of the establishment.

"Now then, Corporal, which is the man you want?" demanded our conductor. "You can only have one of them, you know."

Walking down the ranks, Warrender picked out his man at once. Smith acknowledged the identification with an easy wink, and seemed not altogether sorry to be enabled to take farewell of his late custodian.

"All right, old cock!" he remarked cheerfully. "I'm not going to stop in this hotel of yours any longer. Bye-bye!"

"Glad to get rid of you, I'm sure. Hope they'll take some of the bounce out of you," growled the outraged official in response.

At the gates the jaunty Smith was handcuffed, and a receipt for his body being signed, we set out on our return journey. Our progress through the streets was

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

evidently a source of great interest to the populace, a juvenile contingent of which escorted us to the railway station. Our prisoner, however was quite unabashed by the attention that he was receiving, and seemed to rather enjoy himself than otherwise.

On reaching Morecambe late at night, we discovered that no steamer for Dublin left until the following evening. Our position was, therefore, rather a trying one. We were stranded in a strange town, with a prisoner who was now a veritable Old man of the Sea. Without him we could have made shift for ourselves somehow. Smith appeared to be rather amused at the situation.

"You'll 'ave to look after me, you know, Corporal," he remarked pleasantly; "I wants some supper, too, and I'll precious soon report yer if I don't get it."

After anathematising him heartily for a confounded nuisance, and demanding why the deuce he couldn't have kept out of the road after deserting, Warrender hit on the idea of depositing him in the police station while we looked for lodgings for ourselves.

"Yes, that's all bloomin' fine, to make a sanguinary left-to-be-called-for parcel out o' me like that," whined the aggrieved Smith, when our decision was communicated to him.

Without taking any notice of his views on the subject, we succeeded after a little argument in inducing the superintendent at the nearest police-station to lock him up for the night. When this little matter had been settled we obtained beds for ourselves in a public-house.

The next evening found us once more on the sea. After a rough passage, during which the unhappy Smith was desperately unwell, we reached North Wall Docks. When we arrived at Wellington we handed him over to the Commander of the Guard and reported our arrival to the Sergeant-major. Our expedition had extended from Tuesday to Saturday, and had formed a welcome break in the monotony of the usual daily routine.

CHAPTER XII

A MILITARY COURT-MARTIAL

As a natural sequence of events, Private Smith was, on the following Monday morning, "put back" by the Commanding-officer for trial by court-martial. Concerning these tribunals a few preliminary remarks may very well be entered upon here.

To the non-military members of the community the term court-martial is apt to be fraught with all sorts of mysterious and terrible penalties. Why this should be the case is hardly clear. When William Jones, a civilian rough, receives a well-merited fourteen days' or a month's "hard" at the hands of a police magistrate, he is the recipient of but scant sympathy, save from his immediate "chummies." When, however, his former acquaintances hear that young So-and-so, who 'listed not long since, is to be tried by court-martial, they immediately conclude that he is to be shot, or at any rate to be imprisoned for the remainder of his natural existence.

To the maintenance of discipline in the Army, a code, swift in its application and certain in its effect, is an absolute necessity. It was for this reason, more or less, that military law, as apart from civil procedure, was instituted. To submit every case of a breach of discipline to the slow process of investigation and disposal by a civil tribunal would be as tedious as would the delay thereby involved be unfair to the accused.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

Another very cogent consideration is that, although military law is founded on civil law, many offences which are not recognised as such by the latter are by the former regarded in a very different light. Under this heading would be included such crimes—every military offence, however slight, is technically termed a "crime"—as "Not complying with an Order," "Neglect of Duty," "Sleeping on Sentry," &c. A most accommodating and far-reaching indictment, on which to frame a charge for almost any military crime, is that of "Conduct to the prejudice of Good Order and Military Discipline"—the possibilities are practically boundless. Indeed, under this heading may be held courts-martial for almost any offence imaginable.

Courts-martial, according to the gravity of the offence under investigation, are, in times of peace, of three descriptions. These are, in order of importance, known as General, District, and Regimental. The first, presided over by a Colonel, consists of nine members. As this tribunal can award sentences of death or penal servitude, only the gravest offences are brought before it. The second, the President of which is a Field-officer, has five members, at times reduced to three. This Court may inflict terms of imprisonment with hard labour up to two years. The third has but three members, with a Captain as President; its maximum sentence is forty-two days' hard labour.

At all trials by court-martial an officer—usually the Adjutant of the prisoner's corps—is present to prosecute. His duties on these occasions are briefly laid down in the *Queen's Regulations* to be those of "proving every essential part of his case by sworn evidence. . . . He is an officer whose duty it is to see that justice is done, and not a partisan whose object it is to convict the prisoner." *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum!* is, in theory at any rate, his motto. He is not a member of the court, in the sense of being present to try him, and, for this reason, no objection to his presence can be lodged by the accused. A

A MILITARY COURT-MARTIAL

Non-commissioned officer, who attends as an Orderly, is also furnished.

On the occasion in question the seat of justice was the regimental recreation-room. Thither, at the appointed hour (10.30 A.M.) I proceeded with some N.C.O.s, attending as witnesses. Here, outside the door, were already assembled the prisoner and his escort of two privates, under the command of a Corporal. My late travelling companion had now got rid of a good deal of his former sprightliness, and his appearance was scarcely that of the ideal Fusilier. Very probably the prospect of what was waiting for him had served to damp his spirits.

A moment later and the members of the Court, five in number, arrived.

"Escort and prisoner! 'Shon!" thundered the N.C.O. in charge, and all present obeyed the mystic mandate by springing sharply to "Attention." The members having taken their seats with becoming dignity at a long table covered with a green cloth, on which reposed, before each individual, a supply of spotless foolscap, with pens and ink in readiness, the prisoner, escort, and witnesses were marched in, and the proceedings commenced.

"Escort and Prisoner! 'Shon! Quick-march! Halt! Front-turn! Prisoner, two-paces-to-your-front, March! Stand-at-ease!" were the orders issued in rapid succession by the Court-orderly. All being ready, the President, a Major of one of the Cavalry regiments in the garrison, bade us "pay attention to the proceedings of a District Court-martial." As a preliminary, each of his colleagues was individually sworn on the Bible that "he would well and truly, and without partiality, fear, favour, or affection, try the prisoner, according to the evidence brought before him," and further that "he would refrain from divulging the vote or opinion of any member thereof, unless required to do so in due course of law, so help him God!" The same oath was then administered to the President himself by the senior member.

The order convening the Court was next read over, and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

the accused was asked if he had any objection, personal or otherwise, to the President or any of the members. Beyond a very natural objection, which he was wise enough to refrain from putting into words, to being tried at all, Private Smith was of sufficiently accommodating a disposition to declare himself perfectly satisfied with the arrangements made on his behalf. He was then required to state his name and regimental number. These were immediately compared with those marked in the charge-sheet—the worthy President being apparently under the impression that he might by some mischance have the wrong man before him. In this instance, however, no such little *contretemps* occurred. The name and number tendered by him coincided in every particular with those already in the Court's possession, and he was accordingly called upon to plead to the charges on which he was arraigned.

The charge-sheet, which the President now proceeded to read over at a tremendous rate, was to the effect that "the Prisoner, Number —, Private William George Smith, 1st Battalion, the King's Own Loyal and Royal North Blankshire Fusiliers, a Soldier of the Regular Forces, was charged with (1) *Desertion*, in that he at Dublin, on the 28th day of February, 1891, did absent himself from his battalion, and remained absent until apprehended at Lancaster, on the 8th day of March following; and (2) *Losing by Neglect* the following articles of his regimental kit and necessaries—viz., one pair of trousers, cloth, part worn, one brush, polishing, and one mess-tin and cover."

To both of these indictments was entered the plea of "Not guilty," and the evidence for the prosecution was then taken. The first witness called was Sergeant Watson. After being duly sworn this warrior proceeded to inform the Court as to his knowledge of the case. His testimony was to the effect that "he had been Orderly-sergeant of the prisoner's Company on the 28th day of February last; that, on calling the roll at tattoo on that

A MILITARY COURT-MARTIAL

date, he found him absent, and had accordingly reported him as such." Colour-sergeant Thompson next deposed that "on its being reported to him by the last witness that the prisoner was absent he took an inventory of his kit, and found him to be deficient of those articles with the loss of which he was charged."

It was then my turn. Accordingly, I stated, after the administration of the customary oath, that "I had been Orderly-man of the prisoner's barrack-room on the night on which he was absent, and that I handed over the remainder of his kit to Colour-sergeant Thompson to be taken care of, and was present when the inventory thereof was taken by him." I further stated that "I identified the prisoner now before the Court as the man that I had received into custody at Lancaster Prison on the 10th of March and escorted back to Dublin."

In response to an invitation from the President, Private Smith declined to exercise his right of putting any questions to the various witnesses. A copy of his defaulter-sheet (a military record of offences committed by a soldier) was then read. From this document the Court was made acquainted with the interesting facts that the prisoner had been twice fined for drunkenness, had once been awarded seven days' C. B. for "absence from kit-inspection," and had also suffered 168 hours' imprisonment with hard labour for "not complying with an order and violently resisting the escort."

This closed the case for the prosecution. Accordingly, the accused was now asked if he wished to make any statement in defence, or in mitigation of his sentence. His defence, which was decidedly weak, to say the least of it, and not exactly coherent, was to the effect that "Some bloke 'avin stole my kit, sir, I thought it wasn't much good soldiering no longer." His address concluded with an appeal, based on no particular grounds, that the Court would deal leniently with him.

As far as we were concerned the proceedings were now at an end, and as soon as the prisoner's statement

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

had been taken down (with the little peculiarities of idiom omitted) the Court was ordered to be cleared. In the meantime the members considered their sentence. This is determined by ballot: the votes of the junior members being taken first.

Whilst this was being decided we all returned to barracks, and the ill-fated Smith was once more lodged in the guard-room, to await the penalty awarded him by his judges. The final scene in the drama took place a couple of days later.

The prisoner, bare-headed, and placed between a file of men with fixed bayonets, was marched out on to the barrack-square, and halted before the battalion assembled on parade. All present were then ordered by the Adjutant to "pay attention to the proceeding of a District Court-martial, held at Dublin on the 14th day of March, 1891, for the trial of Number —, Private William George Smith, of the 1st Battalion the K.O.L.R.N. Blankshire Fusiliers, a Soldier of the Regular Forces. The Prisoner, &c. &c. &c. was charged with, &c. &c. &c." We were then informed, with respect to the finding, that "the Court find the Prisoner *Guilty* of both charges," and, as to the sentence, "the Court sentence the prisoner, (number, rank, name, and description as before) to be imprisoned with hard labour for 112 days, and to be put under stoppages of 3s. 7½d. to make good the value of the following articles of his regimental kit and necessaries:—viz., one pair of trousers, cloth, part worn, one brush, polishing, and one mess-tin and cover."

Immediately after the promulgation of the sentence the prisoner was marched back to the guard-room, from which he was shortly afterwards removed to that institution known to soldiers as "the Jug." Here, for the ensuing four months, he was destined to expiate his offence through the medium of a course of shot drill and oakum-picking.

CHAPTER XIII

REGIMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

IN these *fin-de-siècle* days it has been recognised that efforts for the soldier's reclamation are best made by an appeal to his moral nature. With this excellent end in view the authorities have wisely devoted, of late years especially, a good deal of attention to such arrangements for his benefit as are afforded by the regimental institution. Under this heading are classified Canteens, Coffee-shops, and Supper-bars with Recreation-rooms, &c.

Canteens, according to the nature of the stock contained therein, are known as either "wet" or "dry." In the former, beer, porter, and stout, but no spirits, are sold, and in the latter may be procured dry goods of every description from among the thousand-and-one things of which soldiers are constantly in need.

In dealing first of all with "wet" Canteens, I can scarcely do better than give an extract or two from the regulations concerning their management :

"Canteens are established in barracks for the exclusive use and convenience of the troops, and for the ready supply to them of wine and malt liquor at reasonable prices." (Owing to the fact that the ordinary soldier, as a general rule, is not given to indulge in the juice of the grape, the stock of rare vintages maintained in the cellars of these places is not unduly large.) "The sale of ardent

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

and spirituous liquors of any description in Canteens is strictly prohibited. . . . No intoxicating or malt liquors of any description are to be sold before twelve noon, nor after tattoo, nor during the hours of divine service on Sundays."

The hours during which "wet" Canteens are open for business are usually from 12-12.45 in the morning, and from 1.30-9.30 P.M. Certain selected soldiers act as barmen, &c. These posts are greatly coveted, as they provide their occupants with a shilling a day extra pay, and, of course, as much beer as they like to drink. Moreover, possibilities of "making a bit of money" during their tenure of such positions are darkly hinted at. Be this as it may, the men employed in such capacities are after a few weeks invariably distinguished by their opulence. Many of them open banking accounts, and, on their relinquishing their appointments, not infrequently purchase their discharge.

The interior of a beer Canteen is very similar to that of a public-house tap-room. A good large room is furnished with a bar at one end, behind which is the beer-cellar. Barrack-room tables and forms are provided, and a few highly coloured pictures usually adorn the walls. At one end is a stage, where the soldier who when bibulous is musically inclined is wont to warble sentimental ditties for the edification of an admiring audience. On these occasions a bandsman usually presides at a wheezy piano and furnishes, as far as the artist will permit, an accompaniment.

There is always a tremendous rush of business when the doors are first opened at noon, for at this hour the men swarm in after parade for a preliminary drink. In the afternoon there is not much trade, but in the evening, and particularly towards closing time, the room is sure to be thronged. The compulsory abstention from beer from 9.30 A.M. until noon the next day is a severe trial to the hardened toppers.

Discipline is preserved by the N.C.O.—a Corporal or

REGIMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

Sergeant on Canteen duty. He usually contents himself with keeping a strict look-out lest defaulters should enter during prohibited hours,* and confining the most drunken and noisy of the Canteen's patrons. Were he to attempt to carry out the letter of his instructions, and "instantly confine any soldier who appears to be under the influence of liquor, whether tractable or otherwise," he would have all his work cut out, and no guard-room built could accommodate all those who come under this category. Twenty or thirty such might very well be confined nightly. As it is, Commanding-officers have more men brought before them charged with "drunk and disorderly in the Canteen" than for almost any other offence.

A good many people seem to be under the impression that a military Canteen is conducted with the decorum of a Sunday-school picnic. *Apropos* of this, a lady once remarked to me that she was "so pleased to think that soldiers had a room set apart for them in barracks where they could have a glass of beer and discuss military subjects among themselves." A visit to a Canteen on a pay night would probably have relieved her of this delusion. At such times the interior of those institutions is a veritable Pandemonium. The men have not much food in their stomachs, and, consequently, a little beer soon gets to their heads. The average soldier in his cups—or rather quart-pots—is apt to get quarrelsome, and I have known the bloodiest fights to take place about the most trivial incidents imaginable.

There are some men in the ranks who, when they have any money in their pockets, go to the Canteen with the deliberate intention of drinking until it is spent. Such as these reduce themselves to the level of swine, and simply wallow in liquor. It is disgusting to go round a barrack-room at tattoo on a pay day, and see in each one or more men lying like logs on the floor beside their cots. Of course the N.C.O.s in charge do what

* Defaulters—*i.e.*, men confined to barracks as a minor punishment—are only allowed to enter the canteen from 7 to 8 P.M.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

they can to suppress this sort of thing, but is not very easy. In the Service it is an axiom that a man is drunk if he is not sober, but it is not always convenient to put this theory into practice by confining in the guard-room every man who is not sober. It is rather a large order to carry out literally. Besides, an N.C.O. is not thanked too effusively—in fact, he is considered rather a nuisance than otherwise—if he confines men for a “simple drunk.” They are expected to use their own discretion, and, provided a man is not noisy, he is generally permitted to be assisted to his bed by his sympathising comrades. When at a later period I became an N.C.O. myself, I am afraid that I never stopped to make these nice discriminations, but incontinently “clinked” such people at sight. The consequence was that the men in my barrack-room very soon learned that it was on the whole desirable to avoid their room on these occasions, and to get over the effects of their liquor elsewhere.

An N.C.O. of great experience once told me that he considered that the number of cases of drunkenness in barracks would be very considerably lessened if no measures other than pint pots were permitted in Canteens. As it is, the men use quart pots, half-gallon, or gallon cans, and drink in parties of three or four, each of whom replenishes the measure before the “school” is dissolved. If pint pots only were allowed, he contended that they would not then trouble to get them filled so often, and would thus consume less liquor. The idea certainly seems worth trying, and may possibly be productive of success.

The “dry Canteen” takes the place of a general store, where the men in barracks can procure, without having to go from shop to shop in town, almost anything that they require, from needles and pipe-clay to candles and writing-paper. Groceries and tinned provisions of every description are also sold here. As in the “wet Canteen,” selected soldiers serve behind the counter, and receive the same pecuniary advantages as do the potmen.

REGIMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

These institutions (in connection with which are supper-bars) are established with the laudable intention of thereby winning soldiers to the paths of tea and temperance, *viâ* the sale to them at cost price of dry goods and light refreshments. The theory is certainly an excellent one, but the practice thereof is not always an unqualified success.

The fact is the goods in stock are not by any means invariably of a better quality than is that of similar articles obtainable in outside shops, nor in many instances are the goods here offered on more favourable terms to the purchaser.

The convenience of their being situated in barracks alone ensures them the extensive patronage that they enjoy. All the same, the married soldiers' wives, who, one would surely think, would be just the people to find them of the greatest benefit, seem, strangely enough, to prefer to make a considerable portion of their purchases in civilian establishments.

The Coffee-shop and Supper-bar are adjuncts of the "dry" Canteen. Here the men can obtain, at a price suited to the shallowness of their purses, hot meals at night. A cup of coffee, for instance, costs but a half-penny, and such delicacies as liver and bacon, or sausages and potatoes, can be obtained for threepence per plate; a "doorstep" (a slice of bread-and-butter of abnormal thickness) is cheap at a penny, and other solids are retailed at an equally low rate. The immense amount of business done here in the evenings conclusively proves that the men do get hungry between tea at four o'clock and breakfast at eight the next morning.

Canteens are managed either on the "tenant" or the "regimental" system. In the former everything is in the hands of a civilian, who is really for the time being a speculator pure and simple. As a matter of fact, he is seldom simple, but is usually uncommonly wideawake, and contrives to make a very good thing out of his undertaking. For obvious reasons this system is only

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

permitted in the case of very small temporary detachments of troops, when the establishment of a regimental Canteen would not be worth the trouble involved.

The second system is managed by, as its name implies, the regimental authorities. A committee of three officers are charged with the responsibility of administering its business. This committee selects as steward, or business manager, a Sergeant or Pensioner—usually the latter. The appointment is probably the most-sought-after one in the Service. It is not that the pay (six shillings per diem) appertaining to the office is such an inducement, but the reason is rather on account of the vast possibilities thereby offered to the occupant of the position. In plain words, a man who has secured the appointment of Canteen-steward is, by his fellows, held to be in possession of the highest prize open to a soldier under Commissioned rank. He may be like one of Pharaoh's lean kine on first taking up his position, but after a few weeks' occupation thereof he waxes stout, his girth increases perceptibly, and he creates unholy feelings of envy by the way in which he jingles the money in his pockets. Wonderful tales of his vast wealth, of the house property that he owns, and of the manner in which he dabbles in stocks and shares float about on all sides, and gain ready credence. In an invaluable work on "Military Administration," by Major Buxton, there is this trenchant passage: "Certain it is that Non-commissioned officers of a certain class seek the appointment of Canteen-sergeant with an assiduity which is not explained by the legitimate emoluments of the position."

This is casting rather a serious reflection, but I am compelled to state that I do not think it an altogether unjustifiable one. The Canteen committees know very little of what goes on behind their backs, and this, perhaps, is fortunate for their peace of mind.

Owing to the fact that Canteens pay neither rent nor taxes, and have the services of as many assistants as they require at a salary of one shilling per diem, and since

REGIMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

they have no competition to contend against (for they enjoy a monopoly of the sale of liquor and provisions in barracks), they naturally make vast profits. Everything is bought and sold for cash ; credit is never given to the men, and is seldom received by the management. Stock is bought in large quantities, and the "turn-over" is extremely rapid. The various fittings required, such as beer engines and weighing machines, &c., are provided by the Government, but other articles have to be purchased by the Canteen, and become the property of the battalion.

The profits of the different branches ("wet" and "dry") soon accumulate to a respectable sum and amount to several hundreds of pounds annually. They are applied to the benefit of the soldier in various directions. Among other objects may be mentioned those of extra-messing for Christmas dinners, the supply of bread-and-cheese on long field-days and manœuvres, coffee and biscuits at night for guards, prizes for athletic sports, the provision of cricket and football gear, and subscriptions to regimental charities.

It is thus to the direct interest of the soldier to support the Canteen to the best of his ability. The more beer consumed by the battalion, the greater the balance of the Canteen funds ; consequently, in battalions distinguished for their high percentage of teetotalers the Canteen funds are always lowest. The fact that the greater part of the profit is derived from the sale of liquor must be rather a blow to the temperance cause ; nevertheless, this must necessarily be the result of a system which makes it its professed object to sell groceries and non-alcoholic drinks at as little above cost-price as possible.

In all barracks there is a room set apart as a library and recreation-room. Here the men may come and read the newspapers and magazines, a plentiful supply of which is maintained. They can also write letters here, and profitably employ their leisure over the delights of draughts, backgammon, dominoes, and other exciting

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

pastimes. Cards are allowed, but no gambling is permitted. Books may be borrowed from the regimental library and retained for a week at a time.

For the privilege of using this room every man is subjected to a compulsory deduction from his pay of threepence per month. These recreation-rooms and libraries are greatly valued by the troops, and to a great extent ably fulfil the objects for which they are instituted. These are, according to the *Queen's Regulations*, "To encourage soldiers to employ their leisure hours in a manner that shall combine amusement with the attainment of useful knowledge, and to teach them the value of sober, regular, and moral habits."

CHAPTER XIV

FIELD-TRAINING

AFTER musketry, the most important work of a soldier is the annual course of field-training which all ranks have to undergo. The great object of the instruction, which lasts for a period of about three weeks, is to train the men in the conditions of life on active service. To this end all the men in each company, as its turn arrives to be struck off duty for the course, are instructed in the digging of trenches and the building of field-kitchens ; the attack and defence of camps, villages, and convoys ; and the elements of field-fortification, and the construction of wooden bridges, &c.

In addition to this somewhat comprehensive syllabus, the Non-commissioned officers also receive a few days' instruction in military sketching and reconnaissance duty. This often proves rather a trial to some of them, who are, perhaps, more at home in the mysteries of "physical drill by numbers" than the art of calculating "horizontal equivalents," drawing "contours," and constructing scales "showing representative fractions," &c. "This bloomin' representative-fraction business gives me the fair 'ump," once plaintively remarked a gallant Corporal to me as I was endeavouring to impress upon him that the precise position of a decimal point made a good deal of difference to the correctness of his scale.

These courses of field-training are rightly held to be of

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

the utmost importance, and intelligent men cannot fail to derive from them practical opportunities of learning a good deal about their profession. The great drawback which the troops labour under is the limited amount of time allowed in which to learn the large number of subjects laid down. The period devoted to this purpose is only twenty-one days, although more time may be taken when practicable. But this is seldom the case, and, in many stations abroad where there are small garrisons and much duty for them to perform, the work is sometimes crammed into a fortnight or even less. This is owing to the fact that when a Company is going through its course they are relieved of all other duties; this makes the finding of the daily guards and other garrison duties press very heavily on the remainder. At Gibraltar, I once went through a course in eleven days; consequently, a considerable portion of the programme laid down in the drill-book had to be omitted.

Among the subjects in which we were exercised was that of constructing a "trestle bridge." According to the length required for this purpose, three or four trestles are made out of stout scaffolding-poles. These are fastened together with lengths of cord, as no nails may be used in any portion of the bridge. The trestles are then connected by poles, arranged lengthways, across which planks are laid to form a flooring. A bridge of this sort is supposed to be used when ravines or rivers with high banks have to be crossed. I, however, could never understand where on active service troops would be likely to come across the proper number of nicely prepared planks and poles all of suitable dimensions. It is all very well to say that they could carry them about with them, but thirty-foot scaffold-poles are by no means easily conveyed from one place to another as required. Again, troops do not always campaign in a country plentifully provided with suitable roads for the convoy of a military train.

Another point which always struck me as being peculiar in connection with these bridges was the reckless manner

FIELD-TRAINING

in which the troops would jump across yawning ravines, or boldly wade through the supposed impassable rivers, carrying planks about. As a matter of fact, when it is necessary to bridge a river a pontoon bridge is nearly always used. When a trestle bridge has to be made, the frame is put together on the bank and then hoisted into the river-bed. It might, therefore, perhaps be as well to conduct these rehearsals under similar conditions to those prevailing on real service.

Two or three times during this course we had a night attack in the Park. As soon as it was dusk we would take up a position in some part unknown to the remainder of the battalion, who would follow us, an hour or so later, and try to dislodge us. It was rather like playing at hide-and-seek on a particularly large scale, but it served to afford a very agreeable break in the monotony of barrack routine. On the last day of the course an inspection was held by the Major-general commanding the Infantry brigade. With this the training for the year was brought to a conclusion.

CHAPTER XV

AT PIGEON-HOUSE FORT

A WEEK or two after the field-training, as described in the last chapter, had been successfully accomplished musketry practice was again the order of the day.

Up to this date I had only gone through a recruit's course, but I was now to display my prowess with the rifle as a duty-man, or trained soldier.

I was rather glad to learn that, for this purpose, my Company, which was to be the first to fire, was not to go again to the Curragh. This time musketry was to be gone through at Pigeon-House Fort.

As before we were given two or three days' preliminary instruction, with lectures on the theory of musketry, &c. For three hours a day we were exercised in position and aiming drill, in the fond hope that on the expiration of the course we would all become "first-class shots" and "marksmen."

On the afternoon of the third day we paraded in marching-order and proceeded on foot to our new quarters. The weather was extremely hot, and by the time our destination was reached we were not quite so keen about firing as we had been at the start.

Pigeon-House Fort is about five miles from Wellington barracks. It is situated on the coast, at the mouth of the harbour, and is close to the village of Blackrock. The

AT PIGEON-HOUSE FORT

fort buildings comprise a guard-room, an arsenal, some store-houses, and a few barrack-rooms.

As soon as we arrived we found that we were to be accommodated in tents on the wharf which forms the outer boundary of the fort. This was my first experience of being "under canvas," and after the first day or two of it I was by no means deeply enamoured thereof. A bell-tent is inconveniently crowded by four men, but in each of these there were fifteen.

It was of course impossible to use bed-cots, and it was as much as we could do to lay down on the ground the proper number of paillasses in each tent. At night the men had an objectionable plan of putting all these as close together as possible, so that they over-lapped each other, and, distributing the blankets and sheets indiscriminately, they all pigged in together. Without wishing to appear fastidious, I nevertheless felt it incumbent upon me to draw a very hard-and-fast line at participating in this arrangement, and therefore always bivouacked in solitary state under an adjoining gun-shed.

The targets were placed on the sands of a small bay facing the northern front of the fort. According to the range required for the day's practice, we had to fire either across the sea, from the edge of the breakwater, or else to go down to the shore itself. When this latter was the case we were, on account of the tide, obliged to parade about five o'clock in the morning. At this early hour the tide was just going out, and, as the sands were still slopping wet, it was not altogether a very pleasant arrangement.

We fired about fourteen rounds daily, and were then free until the next morning. I used to spend a good deal of time in bathing and fishing, for indulging in both of which forms of recreation there here existed ample opportunities. Owing to the number of wet days the course was somewhat prolonged, and it was not until nearly five weeks had elapsed that we were enabled to return to headquarters.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

I do not think that any of us were at all sorry to get back again to the comparative civilisation of barracks. The dreariness of the long evenings—there were no lights permitted in the tents—and the general discomfort of our surroundings made one extremely glad to return to Wellington and to settle down once more to the daily routine of guards, picquets, and parades.

CHAPTER XVI

ARMY SCHOOLS—EDUCATIONAL CERTIFICATES

ONE afternoon, when I was helping a Sergeant who had asked me to give him a little assistance to master the intricacies of simple proportion, he suddenly remarked to me, "I say, Robinson, why don't you go in for a school certificate?"

I explained that it had not occurred to me that it would be to my advantage to do so.

"Well," he observed in response, "I don't agree with you about that. A certificate will always be useful to you, and you'll never get any promotion without one. Take my advice, and go and see the schoolmaster to-morrow."

As I had a very decided idea that I had by this time served my country quite long enough in the capacity of a Private Soldier, I determined to act on his suggestion as soon as possible. The next afternoon I accordingly introduced myself to Mr. Wilkinson, the regimental instructor of the young idea, and asked him if my name might be enrolled as a candidate for a prospective school certificate.

Mr. Wilkinson very kindly intimated that this was his special business, and after putting a few questions to me as to the depth of my scholarship promised to do what he could in the matter.

"I don't think it will be necessary to trouble you to get a third-class first; it's not much beyond reading and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

writing decently that's required for that," he remarked, when I had satisfied him of my proficiency in the elements of these subjects.

"I should like to get a 'first-class' certificate," I ventured to observe.

"Oh, yes," he replied genially, "I dare say you would, and I'd be very glad if you did, but you'll have to get a second first of all. You won't be allowed to sit for the other until you've done so."

Thereupon he directed me to join a class, presided over by a Lance-corporal, of candidates for this distinction. The subject of instruction happened just then to be on the properties of vulgar fractions. At the end of an hour my tutor was pleased to remark encouragingly that "he thought that I had a fair chance of getting my certificate."

At the examination, which was held about three weeks afterwards, his prophecy was verified, and I was duly presented with my testamur. This certified that it had been awarded me "on the authority of the Sub-Inspector of Army Schools," on account of my possessing a competent standard of knowledge in the elements of simple and compound arithmetic (the questions set embraced reduction, practice, proportion, and vulgar and decimal fractions), the working of regimental accounts (the system on which Army pay-lists are kept), dictation, and handwriting.

I now, on the advice of Mr. Wilkinson, resolved to sit for the higher certificate—that is, the "first-class" one. This, I soon found out, meant a good deal more application than I had at first imagined would be necessary.

These "first-class" certificates are highly prized, and for many men mean months of hard work before they are obtained. The subjects of the examination are a stiff piece of dictation, the geography of the world, English history, copying manuscript, and arithmetic in all its branches, with the exception of stocks and cube-root. The maximum number of marks awarded is 500, of

ARMY SCHOOLS—EDUCATIONAL CERTIFICATES

which, at the time when I sat, a qualifying aggregate of 330 had to be obtained before a certificate was granted. A qualifying minimum of 60 per cent. was necessary in all the subjects, except history and geography; for these 50 per cent. was required. Of the 100 marks for dictation, 40 were allowed for handwriting, 20 of which, with 40 for spelling, formed the qualifying minimum. One-half of the questions in the history paper were on events occurring from the commencement of the Hanoverian period to the present time, and one-half of those set in geography on the British possessions.

A very thorough knowledge of arithmetic is required, as the questions in this subject embrace practically all its branches, except the before-mentioned one of stocks and cube-root. The copying of manuscripts, too, is not at all easy. The candidate is given two or three sheets of foolscap, containing an extremely ill-written official report. Of this he has to transcribe in half an hour, with all abbreviations written in full, as much as possible. Seven mistakes constituted a failure in this subject. At the time of my examination there was a regulation by which if a candidate failed in one subject only, while obtaining the qualifying aggregate in the remainder, he would, on the next occasion that he presented himself, be re-examined in that subject only.

Fortunately for myself, this was not necessary in my case, and I was, after three months of anxious waiting (during which the papers were submitted to the War Office for examination) presented with my "parchment." This is issued "on the authority of the Director-General of Military Education," and proves a valuable acquisition to the possessor.

Ambitious men are permitted to add to their certificates in passing the necessary examinations a number of optional subjects. These include modern and oriental languages, field fortification, military topography, and tactics. The same papers in these subjects are set as for officers qualifying for promotion.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

"First-class" certificates of education are necessary for promotion to the rank of Quarter-master Sergeant, and also to Warrant or Commissioned rank. Owing to the large number of failures among candidates for these certificates it has of late years been found necessary to considerably lower the standard of the papers now set. In addition to this, both the qualifying minimum in each subject, as well as the qualifying aggregate have been somewhat reduced. There has also been introduced a system by which the various subjects are divided into two groups, of which the candidate may tackle one at a time.

Nevertheless, the standard is still a fairly high one, and proves an insuperable stumbling-block to many an otherwise eminently qualified Non-commissioned officer. I could never understand why a man is not considered fit to be a Sergeant-major because he does not chance to be quite at home in solving problems involving the extraction of the square-root, or to have at his fingers' ends the names and heights of remote mountain chains, and a thorough knowledge of the details of as the "Statute of Morte-main," the "Witan-Agemot," or the "Treaty of Utrecht," &c. That such knowledge should be necessary is often a great hardship to those candidates who, being of opinion that the rifle is mightier than the pen, have made it their object to obtain proficiency in the former.

All privates and Lance-corporals have to obtain third-class certificates in dictation and elementary arithmetic before the rank of Corporal can be obtained; a second-class one, entailing a higher standard of knowledge in these subjects, with the addition of a working knowledge of the system on which regimental accounts are kept, is necessary for promotion to Sergeant.

To possess a "first-class" certificate is considered rather a feather in a man's cap. They are seldom gained without a good deal of previous preparation, including several weeks' abstention from the delights of the Canteen, and a burdening of the memory with long lists of

ARMY SCHOOLS—EDUCATIONAL CERTIFICATES

historical and geographical facts. For their attainment the classical education of a public school is quite useless—the commercial education of a Board School is far more to the purpose. An ability to add “tots” with rapidity and correctness will, for instance, serve a candidate to a greater extent than will a profound knowledge of conic sections and the properties of obtuse-angled triangles.

CHAPTER XVII

FOREIGN SERVICE

At Christmas time, as I have said, rumours of our departure for foreign service at an early date were already in the air. During the following months these were somewhat substantiated by a semi-official intimation that the "1st Batt. the K.O.L.R.N. Blankshire Fusiliers were to hold themselves in readiness to leave Ireland for a tour of service abroad at a date to be notified hereafter." Official reticence did not just then permit itself to give us any direct information on the important subject as to our first destination.

During the next few weeks, therefore, the wildest suggestions were flying about. Every station where flies the British flag and flourish the glorious institution of Pack-drill and Sentry-go, from Hong-Kong to Halifax, was suggested in turn.

At length all speculation was authoritatively settled by the arrival of the anxiously expected War Office communication on the subject. This was to the effect that "the battalion would be required to embark from Kingstown, on the 14th of October prox., in H.M. troopship *Tamar*, for passage to Cape Town, calling at St. Helena, with drafts, *en route*."

Now that the important matter of our destination was decided on, information regarding this locality—from the point of view of its desirability as a station to be quartered

FOREIGN SERVICE

in—was anxiously sought for. The old soldiers—of whom a few who had served in the Boer and Zulu campaigns were still in the battalion—now received an added importance. Surrounded by an admiring cluster of recruits, these worthies would gravely spin the most wonderful tales concerning our new destination. In comparison with some of their statements the fables of Sinbad were insipid.

In order to give the men an opportunity to take leave of their friends as far as possible furloughs for a month were granted to all ranks. About half the battalion were permitted to be absent at a time, and the privilege was highly valued. In a few cases, however, it was grossly abused by certain notorious "Queen's bad bargains," who seized the opportunity, afforded by a month's leave and an advance of pay, to desert with as much of their kits, and those of their comrades, as they could conveniently take with them.

Under the existing arrangements, rather more than half of the Army is always abroad, serving their Queen and country in those regions euphemistically referred to as "beyond the seas." The average number of English troops on foreign service is well over 114,000. Of this large total India absorbs about 75,000, while the remainder are distributed through the Mediterranean, Egyptian, South African, and Chinese garrisons.

For convenience sake, all stations abroad are classed as either Indian or Colonial. The period of service in them now seems to be about seven years in each, or fourteen years abroad in all, before returning to England. However, no hard-and-fast rules in this matter have been laid down, and it often appears to be a matter of pure speculation whether a battalion will be abroad for seven or seventeen years at a time. All the same, there has been of late a tendency to shorten the term of foreign service as much as possible.

On the whole, service is more popular in India than in

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

the Colonies. There are many points in favour of each, but those possessed by the former, taking them all in all, outweigh those of the latter. From the men's view of the question, India is undoubtedly the best country of any for "soldiering" in. In the land of the palanquin and pagoda the humblest trooper is a white sahib. Obsequious natives wait on him hand and foot. The wearying fatigues—the duties of the cook-house, Officers' and Sergeants' messes, and the cleaning of barracks, &c., to which he personally devotes so many hours at home—are here performed for him by the host of bobbajees, bheesties, dhobies, sweepers, and cleaners that are attached to all Indian cantonments. Even the work of Orderly-man is here relegated to these useful camp-followers. Again, from a pecuniary standpoint, the soldier drawing Indian pay and allowances is vastly better off than is his brother in a Colonial garrison.

The Indian Government, on whose establishment he is placed from the date of his embarkation, treats him in a much more liberal fashion than do the home authorities, who provide for him in all other parts of the globe. It is scarcely equitable that a man should receive precisely the same pay whether he be serving in Birmingham or Buluwayo—in a little Irish country town where a shilling goes as far as half a crown, or in a South African "up-country" station, where the commonest necessities of life are fifty or sixty per cent. higher than they are in England. The service, however, is full of similar anomalies.

It has often been urged that the climate in the various Colonial stations is immensely superior to that of India. This, however, entirely depends upon which particular station is meant. People at home seem to forget that the Indian Empire is a fairly large one, and that every description of climate is contained within its boundaries. Malta, Hong-Kong, the West Coast of Africa, and Mauritius are quite as deadly to Europeans as is almost

FOREIGN SERVICE

any Indian cantonment that can be mentioned. Enteric fever, which is undoubtedly the scourge of India, is scarcely less devastating than is that of the Mediterranean and malarial variety.

In the matter of barrack accommodation, too, the Indian-stationed soldier, in his comfortable bungalow or well-arranged camp, is far more agreeably housed than his Colonial comrade, in the ramshackle, insanitary, and generally unsuitable buildings designated "barracks" in the Cape and Mediterranean garrisons. Accordingly, it is not difficult to understand why India finds so much favour in the soldier's eyes.

The mere fact of its being so distant from England scarcely troubles him, for, as far as this goes, he considers himself when in Gibraltar to be quite as much separated from his friends as he would be in Calcutta. Having once embarked on a troopship, he realises that furloughs are, for him, things of the past, the mere cost of passage being prohibitive.

The trooping-season for stations abroad is generally arranged so that battalions will arrive in their new quarters at a time of year when the change of climate will not be too greatly felt. For this reason embarkations for India usually take place from October to March, and for South Africa from March to October. For some reason or other our move was made very late in the year, and we arrived at Cape Town in almost the height of summer.

The manner in which a battalion is conveyed to one or other of our Colonial possessions may not prove altogether devoid of interest. More especially should this be the case when the extraordinarily erroneous impressions with which in this respect the average civilian is imbued are taken into consideration.

The public frequently see in the morning paper a brief announcement of the fact that "H.M. Troopship, or hired transport, *Lambkin* sailed on the — inst. from Portsmouth

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

[or Queenstown, as the case may be] with troops on board for Bombay, Egypt, or South Africa." To the majority of people such announcements are of no interest whatever, but to some, perhaps, who have a friend or relation sailing with the trooper, the case is different.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUTWARD BOUND

THE duration of our stay in Ireland—or, for that matter, in any other portion of the United Kingdom—was fast drawing to a close, and from morning to night all was now bustle and confusion. The dimensions of the pile of baggage on the barrack square increased daily, and was largely responsible for the premature whitening of our Quarter-master's hair. All day long, everyone, from Colonel Douglas to the last-joined drummer-boy, was kept hard at work making the final preparations for embarkation. On the last two nights immediately preceding our departure we had to sleep on the floor of the barrack-rooms, with a couple of blankets per man by way of bedding, as everything else had been returned to the stores.

In the fulness of time came the morning of the 14th of October. On this occasion everyone was up at the first note of *réveille*—the last *réveille* that we should hear in the United Kingdom for some time was my reflection as I turned out at 5.30 A.M. Before the echoes of the bugle had died away many men had already completed their toilet, for our couches on this particular morning afforded little temptation to unduly linger in—besides, there was a great deal too much to do. After a hasty breakfast at seven o'clock all hands were employed in loading the transport waggons with the heavy baggage, which was

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

then, escorted by a guard, sent on in advance to Kings-town.

The order had been issued for the battalion to fall in at ten o'clock, and at 9.30 A.M. the "dress for parade" sounded. Half an hour later we fell in on the square, every man in full marching-order, and wearing the white helmet and pugaree which now superseded our Fusilier busbies; the prisoners and sick—of whom there were about a dozen—being in the rear, under an escort.

After a short inspection the battalion was wished "Good-bye" by Lord Wolseley, who, accompanied by his Staff, had come to see us off. Then came the word from the Colonel: "Battalion! Attention! Form Fours—right! By the left—quick ma-r-ch!" The big drummer gave a preliminary tap on his drum, the band struck up, and we stepped off at a swinging pace, nearly 900 strong, to the strains of "The Girl I left behind Me." Just outside the barrack-gates we were met by the bands of the other battalions stationed in the garrison, which, as is the custom on these occasions, had come to "play us off."

Preceded by these, and followed by apparently half the population of Dublin, civil and military, we made our way through the town. For a short distance, to avoid the traffic, our route lay along the banks of the Liffey, the bands relieving each other in a succession of appropriate airs. The strains of "The Girl I left Behind Me," alternating with those of "Auld Lang Syne," were most in evidence.

In half an hour or so we arrived at Westland Row Station, and, forming up in a long line on the platform, entered the train which was waiting to receive us. As is usual at such times, the accommodation provided was most inadequate. We were packed like herrings, fourteen or sixteen in a carriage constructed for ten, but which could only hold eight with any approach to comfort. In marching-order a man takes up a good deal more room than he would otherwise do. No provision,

OUTWARD BOUND

however, seems to have been made for this obvious fact.

The work of entraining having been completed, the word was given, and we steamed out of the station, the bands on the platform playing a last farewell. Kingstown was reached in about forty-five minutes, and the first stage of our journey thus accomplished. Leaving the train here, the battalion fell in on the roadway just outside the station, and marched by companies to the dock where H.M.S. *Tamar* was lying.

The drafts of Artillery and Engineers for St. Helena and Natal were already embarked, and at first sight these appeared to have occupied all the available space on board. Drawn up on the edge of the quay, we were, before being permitted to cross the gangway to the deck, "told off" into messes of sixteen (with a Non-commissioned officer in charge of each) by a Sergeant of Marines. As each mess was told off it crossed the gangway and quickly made its way below. Here, for the first time in my life, I found myself on the lower deck of a trooper. The scene that presented itself was such as is not easily forgotten.

The accommodation provided for the troops consisted of a long low space, extending for about three-parts the length of the ship. Towards the stern, a companion-ladder led from the spar-deck to the hold, on the edge of which was a small crane, used for raising and lowering baggage. On either side the troop-deck was lighted by a row of port-holes. The space between these, ten feet by six feet, or thereabouts, was all that was provided for the sixteen men of each mess, in which to live and sleep; and some of the messes contained eighteen men. The greater part of this interval was taken up by a swinging-table suspended from the ceiling. Immediately over this table was a rack, in which the men's accoutrements were stored. The wooden battens composing it were provided with hooks, from which were, at night, suspended the hammocks. A second troop-deck, of somewhat smaller

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

dimensions, lay somewhere down in the regions below, underneath the bottom row of port-holes.

Little time, however, was allowed for the contemplation of these arrangements, for there was still a good deal of work to perform. First of all the troops were marched to the ship's armoury, where every man had to give up his rifle and bayonet. These, for the purpose of identification, bore a label, with the owner's number, name, and Company inscribed thereon.

As soon as this had been done an order was issued for all hands to muster on deck. Here we were employed, on and off, until evening, in moving the baggage from the quay to the ship's hold. This was very hard work indeed, and for its accomplishment long gangways were run out from the large port-holes of the hold to the edge of the quay. Across these gangways the heavy baggage was hauled by means of ropes, while the more portable articles were carried on deck and sent below by a crane. All this involved considerable labour, and everyone was very glad when, at one o'clock, a temporary respite was occasioned by the arrival of dinner.

This was served on the troop-decks, and consisted of tinned-mutton, with preserved potatoes and ship's biscuit. Owing to the small size of the tables it was absolutely impossible for all the members of a mess to sit down at once; consequently, those who were unable to find accommodation either at the table or underneath it had to wait for a vacant place. No cups, plates, or basins are provided on a troopship. Their place is taken by tin pannikins and small metal dishes, something like frying-pans minus the handles. A circumstance that scarcely adds to the attractiveness of these articles is that the same pannikins are used indiscriminately for soup or tea.

Dinner over, the order was given for all hands, with the exception of the Orderly-man of each mess (who was exempted for the purpose of washing up, &c.), to continue the work of getting the baggage on board. At four o'clock a second respite occurred, while the troops went

OUTWARD BOUND

below for tea. For this meal the inevitable ship's biscuit and tea, made without either milk or sugar, were provided. As the ship was surrounded with bum-boats, loaded with such luxuries as fresh bread, butter, cheese, eggs, &c., those who were fortunate enough to possess any money were enabled to indulge in something more to their taste.

After tea the work of getting the baggage on board was resumed, under the electric light, until about 7.30 P.M., when, to the great satisfaction of all of us, who had been labouring like convicts all day, the last kit-bag was put in the hold and permission was given to go below.

Blankets and hammocks were now issued out from one of the ship's store-rooms, and as the rule observed in their distribution was that of "first come, first served," a tremendous confusion and crowding to obtain these articles ensued. A huge crowd of 800 men or so, struggling at a small doorway, rendered it a matter of by no means easy accomplishment to obtain them. Happy the man who got hold of a hammock—as for a blanket as well, that was well-nigh impossible. Even when a man succeeded in obtaining either, it was a matter of great difficulty to get away with his prize without having it forcibly torn from his grasp. Profiting by the advice of an experienced troopship traveller, I had beforehand bribed the sailor in charge of the store, and consequently every night of the voyage I had a hammock and a couple of blankets reserved for me. By means of a little judicious corruption in the proper quarter the comfort of one's surroundings on a trooper may be materially increased.

Having at length got to one's mess with one's hammock, it was anything but a simple matter to sling it and get into it. In order to utilise as far as possible every inch of space on the troop-deck, certain preparations have to be made at night. The swinging-tables are lowered to the level of the deck, and the hammocks are then suspended from the hooks fastened into the racks overhead. The two forms in each mess are, in the same manner, placed alongside the tables. Owing to the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

crowded condition of the deck, three or four hammocks had to be slung in the not excessively liberal space allotted to one, each being wedged in between several others.

It was extremely fortunate, I thought, that the hooks from which they were suspended were securely fastened, otherwise some of them would most certainly have yielded to the strain, thereby occasioning a little unpleasantness to the occupants of the deck below. This was crowded with those who were unable to find space for their hammocks, and I am inclined to think these men were best off. The married men, for whom a special portion of the deck had been reserved, had not so much to complain of in this respect. Separate accommodation was also provided for their wives and children.

It is a rule in the Navy that the Blue-jacket should retire to bed an hour earlier than does his soldier-comrade. As on a trooper the Captain thereof is in command of all on board, this regulation is carried into effect with respect to the military contingent. Accordingly, at 8 P.M. the bugler on duty sounded "First post," when the Orderly-sergeants came round to call the roll. The men now commenced to make the best arrangements they could with the limited means at their disposal to pass the night. Those who could do so pulled off their boots and got into their hammocks; the remainder had perforce to lie on the deck beneath. At 8.30 "Lights out" sounded, and the electric light was immediately lowered to an almost invisible glimmer.

For the sake of obtaining what little air there was I had slung my hammock next to a port-hole, and for some time I lay awake watching the lights of the ships in the harbour. It very soon became apparent that sleep, under the prevailing conditions, was quite impossible without considerable further practice. The discomfort of the surroundings, not to mention the oppressive state of the atmosphere, consequent on the presence of something like 600 men, closely packed, rendered all attempts utterly

OUTWARD BOUND

futile. Unpleasant as it was here, it was even worse on the lower troop-deck, where the remainder of the men were quartered. Accordingly, I got out of my hammock, and picked my way with difficulty over the bodies of the men on the flooring. Going up the companion-ladder, I soon reached the upper deck.

It was a beautiful starlight night. A large electric lamp on the edge of the quay flashed out its beams across the water, causing the sea to look like ink. The gangways had been drawn in, and the ship, moored to the wharf by a single cable, which, under the rays of the big arc-lamp, was gleaming like a bar of silver, gently rose and fell with the tide. The soft lapping of the water against the edge of the dock and the pure cool air around one all tended to make a night on deck more pleasant than one passed in the foetid atmosphere below. Accordingly, enveloped in my great-coat, with a coil of spare cable for a pillow, I stretched myself out in an unappropriated corner, and presently fell asleep. About 4.30 A.M. I awoke, and, feeling very cold, descended to my Company's quarters.

Here, if the atmosphere was bad at night, it was now several degrees worse, thickness being the only term applicable to its condition. I was glad to come on deck again, almost at once, and, by the advice of a sailor who was cleaning the ablution-room, to take the opportunity of making use of it before the rush which would follow later.

It was well that I did so, for, when at half-past five o'clock the wash-house was opened, it immediately became thronged with a crowd of men trying to get in, and with others who, having completed their ablutions, were equally trying to get out. Every morning during the voyage this state of things was repeated, and it soon became the custom for the men to form into a dense *queue* outside the door for an hour or more before it opened.

The washing arrangements for the troops were limited

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

to two ablution-rooms, each consisting of a small chamber, with troughs running round the sides. These troughs were filled with either salt or partially condensed water by means of a hose-pipe, basins and taps being considered quite unnecessary. As each room only afforded space for about twenty men at the very most to wash in at a time, and there were some nine hundred to do so before it was closed at seven o'clock, it became a matter of considerable difficulty to perform one's ablutions at all, even when one rose at cock-crow. A very cogent reason for endeavouring to be there among the first was due to the fact that, from the time that the wash-houses were opened to the time (an hour and a half later) when they were closed, the water remained unchanged. Its condition at this time can be better imagined than described. An analysis of a small quantity of it would probably have revealed some exceedingly curious results.

Active preparations were now being made for our departure. The funnels were belching out dense volumes of black smoke, and the sailors running about making everything ship-shape. Petty officers and blue-jackets were at their wits' end to have everything ready in time, and to the untrained eye the most chaotic confusion prevailed. By degrees, however, order was restored out of the apparent disorder, and it soon became evident that a start would be made.

At length, shortly after 10 A.M., the word was passed for the band to muster on deck, and, to the melodious strains of "Farewell to Erin," the cables connecting the good ship *Tamar* with the Kingstown quay were cast off, the screw revolved, and we slowly steamed out of the harbour. As we headed for the open sea the plaintive notes of "Auld Lang Syne," borne on the breeze, floated after us from the shore. Our voyage of six thousand miles had commenced, and the anchor would not again be dropped until we reached the Cape Verde Islands, where we were to coal.

CHAPTER XIX

A VOYAGE IN A TROOPSHIP

THE morning was at that time bright and sunshiny, although a fresh wind and somewhat choppy sea occasioned in me dire misgivings as to what was in store for us. Before we had been sailing an hour the breeze stiffened considerably, rain began to fall, and we soon found ourselves in for a bout of fairly rough weather. By this time most of the men had succumbed to sea-sickness, and, as far as this went, there were few of us fortunate enough to be entirely unaffected. Many of the old soldiers—men who had been to India and to China—began, before very long, to both look and feel decidedly qualmish. I think that it was as much due to the abnormal rolling of the ship as to the wind that so many men were placed *hors-de-combat*. It seemed to me that no ship could ever yet have been docked which equalled the *Tamar* for rolling and pitching. At one moment the bowsprit was aiming at the sun, at the next it appeared to be trying to impale a shark. It is bad enough to be sea-sick on a first-class liner, surrounded by everything that can be done for the alleviation of one's sufferings, but for unadulterated misery at such times nothing can equal the lower deck of a trooper.

The storm continued with more or less violence for three days. During this unhappy period all on board were supremely uncomfortable, and many were the heart-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

felt prayers on the part of the sufferers for our speedy consignment to the bottom. At times like these the soldier, who does not shine at sea, is not seen at his best.

An amusing episode of this rough weather was due to the fact that one morning by order of the Colonel the unfortunate band were summoned on deck to play to the Officers and some ladies who, with their families, were going out to join their husbands. After having with great difficulty got into position and fixed up their music-stands, the ship would give a sudden lurch and send them sprawling to the side-rails. When they were at last ready to commence another difficulty presented itself. Many of the instrumentalists had not yet recovered from sea-sickness, and, in particular, one who played the trombone. Bravely did he battle with a severe attack, but his heroic efforts were unavailing. The music commenced—an operatic selection—suddenly the trombone let out a mournful blast, the instrument fell from the performer's nerveless hands, and the unhappy man rushed in despair to the side.

After this incident, the musicians were sent below, and their services were not again requisitioned until the fine weather set in. It was then really very pleasant to sit and smoke on deck, listening to the strains of the band, which sound at sea with a particularly charming effect.

On the morning of the fourth day of sailing the sea settled down, and, to every one's relief, the remaining days of the voyage were warm and pleasant. Very soon every one had got their sea-legs, and were thus enabled to take a little more interest in the life around them.

It must not be thought that soldiers travelling on a troopship are idle all day, or that the sailors do all the work. This is by no means the case, for the red-coat has to lend a hand all round. All "fatigue work," such as, swabbing decks, polishing brass railings and binnacle-cases, shifting ashes from the furnaces overboard, &c., is performed by the troops. At all hours of the day and

A VOYAGE IN A TROOPSHIP

night piercing whistles are sounded, and hoarse words of command call out—"Ash party—up ashes. Reel-ers aft! Swab-bers on deck," &c. Any idea that I had entertained to the effect that I was a passenger on board was speedily dispelled, and I very soon found out that I was intended to, as far as possible, work my passage.

In addition to these different employments, every man, and a proportion of the N.C.O.s, has to take his turn at "Watch-duty," which lasts for twelve hours at a time. This is practically the same thing as guard-duty on shore, and consists in setting a number of men to do sentry-go on various parts of the deck. It always struck me as being a duty which might with advantage have been rather differently arranged. It did little practical good—the Marines furnishing the necessary sentries on the half a dozen posts where they were really required—and spoilt the night's rest, as, while "on watch" the men had to get what sleep they could, lying down on the deck. At all events, the number of men detailed every day for the duty—about sixty for each watch—might have been considerably reduced.

A typical day on a troopship ("troopships" have now been replaced by "hired transports," but the routine is practically the same on each) would be something like this. At 5 A.M. the Orderly-bugler sounds *réveille*. A quarter of an hour later every man, with his hammock and blanket rolled up, parades at the stores, and returns these articles. His next proceeding is to get a wash, after which the men in each mess clean up that portion of the troop-deck for which they are responsible. In the meantime the Orderly-men assist the cooks to prepare breakfast. This is easily done, as it merely consists of ship's biscuit or bread and tea, entirely devoid of milk and sugar. After breakfast every one, with the exception of the Orderly-men and cooks, has to go on deck, while the quarters below are thoroughly cleaned, preparatory to their inspection by the Captain of the ship. At 10 A.M. there is a parade for roll-call, after which any

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

special orders for the day are given out. Two or three times while at sea a parade in marching-order may take place, with the object of ascertaining that each man is in possession of all his accoutrements, &c. At half-past eleven the Canteen is opened for an hour. Here are sold, at exorbitant rates, biscuits, cheese, herrings, groceries, &c., but no liquor of any description. Fresh bread, known at sea as "soft tommy," can be purchased from the ship's baker.

The next event is dinner, which takes place at 12.30. The menu at this meal is almost invariably the same—tinned beef or mutton, with preserved potatoes and, occasionally, soup. We were only served out with fresh meat about half a dozen times during the whole voyage. Nowadays, frozen meat is largely substituted for the tinned variety—a change that is greatly appreciated. At every meal the inevitable bag of ship's biscuit makes its appearance. To relish this preparation—which, in outward form, closely resembles chips of concrete—is an acquired habit. I must say, however, that it seemed to be of good quality, and was certainly never "weevily."

Men who were detailed for fatigue or watch-duty were employed on such between meals. The remainder of the troops were at liberty to spend the day as they pleased—usually in lying about the deck, smoking, reading and playing cards. With reference to smoking, it should be explained that this is everywhere strictly forbidden except on deck, and then permitted only during certain hours. The signal to light up is most appropriately the sounding by the bugler on duty of the call "Commence firing," while "Cease firing" means pipes out.

Tea, at which the fare is the same as at breakfast, is served at 3.30 P.M. As it is prepared in the same coppers in which the soup has been made an hour or two previously, its flavour is a little peculiar. This is the last meal of the day, and from now until breakfast at 7.30 A.M. the next morning, should the soldier have any pangs of hunger he must stay them as best he can. There are not many means

A VOYAGE IN A TROOPSHIP

of doing this, and practically the only one that there is consists in purchasing at exorbitant rates from the chief Steward the broken meats from the saloon tables. This practice, however, is, in the interests of the trading monopoly enjoyed by the Canteen proprietor, strictly forbidden, and has to be resorted to under cover of darkness. At half-past six hammocks and blankets are issued, and the men usually arrange these as soon as possible, in order to make sure of obtaining space to do so. At eight o'clock "First post" is sounded, when the Orderly-sergeants come round the various messes to call the roll. This is followed, half an hour later, by "Lights out."

Somewhat in this manner passed the days with but little to relieve the monotony of the voyage. At length, on, I think, the tenth day at sea, land was sighted on the port bow. With the aid of a telescope I managed to make out what appeared to be a long, low bank, just visible on the edge of the horizon. This proved to be the coast line of the Cape de Verde Islands.

Here we were to coal, and accordingly put in for this purpose at the port of St. Vincent. The entrance to the harbour, up which we were soon steaming, is formed by a beautiful bay, which, with its lighthouse at the summit of a lofty rock and little town nestling at the foot of the hills surrounding the shore, presented a pleasant sight to our eyes, which had lately gazed on nothing but the sea.

As soon as the ship had been made fast to some huge buoys the work of coaling was commenced. This was performed by a number of West African negroes, who, filling their baskets from the coal barges moored alongside, ran up the planks connecting them with the bunkers, with their loads on their heads. This operation vastly interested the troops, who crowded to the ship's sides—notwithstanding the clouds of coal-dust, which was covering everything—all day long.

During the interval formed by the dinner-hour some of the black boys gave us a most interesting display of their

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

wonderful diving abilities. Some one, either by accident or design, dropped one of his brass buttons overboard. Instantly a number of the blacks dived after the prize. Their forms, perfectly naked save for the merest pretence at a waist-cloth—which, when in the water, they dispensed with altogether—could be seen with ease in the clear depths. Presently a woolly head bobbed up above the surface, and the owner thereof, exclaiming "Hya! Hya! Massa! Here he am!" took from his mouth the button. After this we kept them pretty busy diving after half-pence, blacking-tin lids, empty biscuit-boxes, and other valuables.

Presently I noticed a tremendous disturbance taking place, and all the blacks making as quickly as possible for the barges. The cause of the excitement was plainly denoted by the sharp fin of a shark barely a hundred yards away cutting through the water at a tremendous rate. Fortunately he did not secure any victim, as all the boys reached their boats safely. When they had done so they stood up and shook their fists at John Shark, who still hovered in the vicinity, in the hope of presently catching one of them napping. One of the blacks, seeing this, shouted out, grinning tremendously as he did so, "Hi! you, Mass Shark! You plenty bad debbil, but no can catch black boy! White man shoot him bang, if you no go 'way!"

The fish apparently accepted the warning, for shortly afterwards the blacks were diving as before. I felt rather relieved when coaling operations were recommenced, as the possibility of a tragedy in that shark-haunted water was not pleasant to contemplate.

Just before we left St. Vincent, I became, by the judicious expenditure of sixpence, the possessor of a big bundle of delicious bananas and a dozen fine oranges. Notwithstanding their modest cost, I was assured by a blue-jacket that I had paid about three times the market value.

Towards evening we put to sea again, and the run to

A VOYAGE IN A TROOPSHIP

St. Helena, our next port of call, was commenced. The ceremony of crossing the line was honoured with the customary observances and served to afford a break in the monotony of the voyage. About this time the weather became very hot, and although awnings were rigged everywhere, the heat, especially at night, was most oppressive, and, as may be imagined, the atmosphere of the troop-decks was simply unendurable. The rules as to sleeping below were now relaxed, and we were permitted to spend the nights on deck. On account of the crowded condition of the ship this was, for every one, quite impossible, although the utmost ingenuity was displayed by the men in finding the most out-of-the-way corners in which to stow themselves. For two nights I slept on top of a lantern-store, but was driven from this retreat at about three o'clock in the morning on the second day by the hose-pipe of an early swabbing party, who had not imagined that this position was occupied.

On arriving at St. Helena, where we stopped for a few hours, we disembarked a draft of Artillery and Engineers for Jamestown. I should very much have enjoyed a run ashore in order to stretch my legs a little. This, however, was out of the question, as none but officers were permitted to leave the ship. Consequently, the remainder of us had to content ourselves with merely gazing at the harbour.

About six o'clock in the evening the *Tamar*, heading for Cape Town, left the rugged heights of St. Helena behind, and was soon ploughing her way through the vast expanse of water that still lay between us and our destination. The Southern Cross shining down upon us above the tall mainmast was plainly visible at night, and brought home to us the fact that the northern latitudes had now all been passed. This was still further evidenced by the almost total absence of twilight. Between the sinking of the sun into the sea and the falling of night there was a pause of only a few minutes.

At last, on one memorable day (the twenty-sixth morn-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

ing at sea), the welcome cry from the look-out man, "Land ahead!" showed that the long voyage was fast drawing to a close. The cry from the mast-head produced the greatest excitement, and when, shortly afterwards, it was verified, an eager crowd thronged the deck to catch a first glimpse of our new home.

Every hour we drew rapidly nearer to the still far-distant coast, and by dinner-time we easily made out the lighthouse on Robben Island. On approaching this the peninsula (round the shores of which Cape Town is built), with the mighty form of Table Mountain towering above it, came suddenly into view as we entered the waters of the bay.

Table Bay from the sea is often compared by the Colonials to that more famous one of Naples. Making due allowance for the natural pride of possession, this is, after all, not quite so unwarrantable as those who have not seen both might at first imagine. The well-laid-out city, with its fringe of prettily built villas at Sea Point, nestling at the base of the wooded slopes of Signal Hill and the Devil's Peak, with the flat-topped Table Mountain between them, and the magnificent docks, thronged with the shipping of every nation, all combine to produce a very fine effect.

CHAPTER XX

SOLDIERING IN CAPE TOWN

ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon the *Tamar* was safely berthed alongside the Loch Jetty, and the long voyage, which had lasted for just twenty-six days, was at an end. This was a cause for profound rejoicing, for the lot of those who go down to the sea in troopships is an anything but pleasant one. We were not, however, to disembark until the following morning, as the quarters we were to occupy had not yet been evacuated.

This was rather a disappointment to most of us, who had been looking forward to the material comforts of a good meal and a night in bed. After over three weeks' compulsory abstention from these luxuries we thought it rather hard to have to wait even another twenty-four hours for them.

There was plenty of work to do now in the way of getting the baggage ashore, and in this all hands were busily employed for several hours. The quantity of impedimenta with which a battalion travels is simply enormous, and is responsible for an immense amount of hard labour, which has to be supplied by the troops. Although every one exerted himself to the utmost, it was not until midnight that the work was completed.

At ten o'clock the next morning we left the ship. The day was very hot, even for Cape Town—November there being almost the hottest month of the year—and, after the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

bustle and confusion of getting our equipment together in the crowded troop-decks the heat was most trying.

Our progress through the streets attracted a considerable amount of attention from the crowds of Europeans, Colonials, and natives, who thronged the pavements along the route. An appreciative detachment of Kaffirs and Hottentots escorted the band at the head of the column, and seemed to be greatly impressed by the dignified manner in which the drum-major twirled his staff. The barracks for which we were bound were situated at a distance of about two miles from the docks. As we passed the parade-ground near the railway station, we saw, drawn up there, the —th Batt. Loamshire Light Infantry, whose place we were taking. They themselves were under orders for Natal, and were about to embark for that Colony in our troopship.

Main Barracks, Cape Town, in the year 1891 were, without exception, the most utterly unsuitable and very worst buildings in which I have ever known English soldiers to be quartered. I have seen barracks occupied by French and Spanish infantry, which, while nothing whatever to boast of in the way of comfort and convenience, were simply palatial compared to those which we were now to occupy. The building, which was shaped roughly in the form of a capital T, was originally the Dutch slave-market, and was erected towards the end of the last century. It was afterwards used as a Government store-house, but, being considered unsuitable for their purpose, was, peculiarly enough, held to be eminently adapted to the housing of troops. Although consisting only of two stories, it was of considerable height, and with walls of great thickness. It was built of stone throughout, and entirely covered with a sort of red-brick-coloured plaster, of exactly the same hue as the sand which to a depth of a couple of inches covered the ground all round it.

If from the outside our quarters were not particularly beautiful to look at, from the interior they were even less

SOLDIERING IN CAPE TOWN

so. Each room, some of which had stone floors, contained a whole Company of about one hundred and twenty men. They were very long, and rather narrow, with high ceilings supported by beams. The walls and floors of all of them were extremely dirty, and were in a very bad state of repair. Owing to the narrowness of the windows, and the thickness of the walls in which they were set, they were exceedingly badly lighted. There was no gas in any of the rooms, and at night the only illumination provided was by means of a few dimly burning oil lamps. On account of the extreme state of dilapidation of the walls, floors, and ceilings, they were full of draughts, almost uninhabitable whenever it rained, and swarming with vermin of the most loathsome description. Altogether, until we had settled down a little, the first few nights were ones of the utmost discomfort.

Since writing the above I have been told that some improvements have lately been made, and that the whole barracks are being gradually reconstructed. I should say that this was most certainly necessary, as no more unsuitable quarters for living in than were these when my battalion first went there could scarcely be imagined. A self-respecting inmate of a workhouse in England would turn up his nose in disgust at the disgraceful surroundings in which at this period we were compelled to live. Our Quarter-master, when he first saw the barracks, was heard to deliver himself of the opinion that "it was a doubly blanked pity that Providence had omitted to arrange for an earthquake to upset the whole place before our arrival." English troops are not by any means sybarites, but a little regard for common decency at least is their right.

The nights in these rooms—more like casual wards than anything else—were a great trial to men with any vestige of self-respect. On entering, one saw a long, narrow, and lofty room, lighted by a few feebly flickering and evil-smelling oil lamps, which in windy weather it was almost impossible to keep alight. Four long rows of

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

narrow bed-cots ran down the entire length, but owing to the crowded condition of the rooms there was only an interval of about three feet between each cot. The space between the second and third row was occupied by tables and forms. When it rained the water dripped through the ceilings into puddles on the floor beneath. Rats scampered about the rooms, and disgusting forms of vermin abounded. From the fact of over one hundred men sleeping in each room the atmosphere by morning was most oppressive. Although stiflingly hot in summer, the barracks were very cold in winter. Owing to their great size, it was very difficult to heat them properly. Appreciating this fact, the authorities had carefully omitted to provide any of the rooms with fire-places.

This picture may seem a strong one, but it is by no means over-drawn, and no one who "soldiered" in these barracks during this period can in any way dispute it. People who have visited the splendid buildings in which our troops are quartered at home, such as the Anglesea Barracks, Gosport, the Marlborough Barracks, Dublin, and those in Albany Street and Knightsbridge, London, or the new blocks at Aldershot and Chatham, can have no conception of the sort of places in which battalions are quartered in some of the Colonial garrisons. "Out of sight" seems indeed to be "out of mind." While well-meaning faddists in England are expending their energies in providing the troops with "Soldiers' Homes" and "Associations for the supply of Pure Literature," their brothers abroad, in tropical climates, and surrounded by every temptation, are in danger of being forgotten.

Huge barrack-rooms, like these in which we were now living, are the greatest mistake imaginable. It is almost impossible to properly maintain discipline in them. An N.C.O. can look after a dozen or so men very effectively, but to expect him to control at night eighty or ninety of every sort of character and disposition—many of them half-drunk and fully inclined to take every

SOLDIERING IN CAPE TOWN

advantage of his difficulties—is putting too much on his shoulders.

Although the establishment of Non-commissioned officers in each Company is fourteen, nothing like this number sleep in the barrack-rooms with the men. Those who are married, for instance, as do those who are employed on the Garrison Staff, live quite apart. The senior unmarried Sergeants, too, are, when possible, provided with separate accommodation. Again, some of the other N.C.O.s are frequently away from the room all day, owing to their being on guard or duty outside barracks. Thus it often happened that a junior Lance-corporal was the only Non-commissioned officer present. These N.C.O.s are of very little use, as they have so little real authority.

Owing to the uncomfortable nature of their surroundings, it was not perhaps altogether surprising to find that so many of the battalion when in this station “broke out” in a hitherto unparalleled fashion. During the few weeks that we were quartered in Cape Town the percentage of crime in the battalion was considerably higher than it had been for some time before. Courts-martial were of almost weekly occurrence, and the guard-room was daily filled with prisoners.

Fortunately, soldiers have a happy knack of making the best of things, and in a few days’ time we had settled down a little and got things into some sort of shape. The hot weather which we were then experiencing was probably responsible for the swarms of mosquitoes which invaded the barracks. But mosquitoes were by no means the worst evil with which we had to contend. The iron bed-cots, and the walls and wooden shelves in the rooms, were literally alive with vermin of a horrible description. During the stifling nights of the first few weeks that we spent there sleep was almost impossible, and we would wake up in the morning more tired than when we lay down at tattoo.

Another unpleasant feature of the hot weather was

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

occasioned by the great scarcity of water. One could scarcely get enough to wash in properly, while baths were quite unattainable. A reservoir which has lately been built on the top of Table Mountain now ensures an adequate supply at all times of the year. To have a bathe in the sea involved a walk of a mile and a half, and this in the tremendous heat was scarcely worth while. Twice a week, however, there were compulsory bathing parades at 6.30 A.M.

During the summer months all parades, &c., had, according to the regulations of the garrison, to be concluded by 8 A.M. in order to avoid the sun as much as possible. The rest of the day was at the men's disposal, and very difficult to get through it often proved. In the evening one could go out and get a little of the necessary exercise, which the heat, during the earlier hours of the day, practically forbade.

One of the greatest of the many great wants in Cape Town, from a military point of view, was that there existed no place in town where a man could spend his leisure profitable and pleasantly. There was no Soldiers' Club, or Garrison Recreation-room, as there is in almost every other military station. The "Soldiers' Home" here was not a very inviting institution. On the outside walls of the dingy barn-like building which was used for this purpose were painted aggressive remarks about the future state of those who did not subscribe to their tenets. I visited this place on one occasion with a view to testing its hospitality. The Salvation Army principles on which it was conducted struck me as being singularly unlikely to wean men from the rival attractions of the public-house and Canteen. Before I had been in the reading-room for five minutes I was anxiously asked "if I was saved," and on my expressing with becoming diffidence my doubts as to whether either I or my questioner was fully qualified to give an authoritative opinion upon the matter, I was evidently regarded as a degraded being capable of almost any infamy imaginable.

SOLDIERING IN CAPE TOWN

This charitably conducted institution was situated in Waterkant (Cant would scarcely have been more suitable) Street, and was the stronghold of a faithful few. Emis-saries from it used to invade the barrack-rooms weekly, and pester the troops to sign the pledge. With the utmost good-nature the men would always comply with this request, and then straightway repair to the Canteen, easing their somewhat toughened consciences with the subtle reflection that their undertaking to sign the pledge did not necessarily argue their promise to keep it.

Under the circumstances, the public-houses, with which the town was over run, reaped a rich harvest, and almost all of the men's pay went into the coffers of their proprietors. Liquor, except English imported beer, was exceedingly cheap, and very bad in its effects. In particular, there was a vile concoction called "Cape Smoke" (Colonial brandy), two or three glasses of which would make a man for the time being almost mad.

Garrison duty in Cape Town was very light, and a man seldom found himself on guard more than twice a month. When the weather cooled a little field-days and route-marches were of frequent occurrence. After we had been in the station a few weeks we used to think nothing of marching round one of the flanks of the mountain, scaling Signal Hill, or going to Camp Bay and back in a morning. On one occasion we performed with the rest of the garrison rather a memorable feat. This was a night march round Table Mountain. It takes place annually, but is now, as I believe, performed by day instead. Starting at seven o'clock in the evening, we reached barracks again about the same time the next morning. As the total distance was almost thirty-three miles, this was very good time. It was a fine moonlight night when we performed the march—otherwise it would probably have occupied considerably more time. Only two or three men failed to keep up with the column, but, although rather footsore at the end of it, I am glad to say that I managed to accomplish it without any great

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

difficulty. Many people have an idea that no route-marching is ever performed by any regiment but in England or Ireland. They are, however, quite mistaken in this, as far more route-marching, and (considering the climate and roads) under harder conditions, takes place abroad—in South Africa and India, especially—than at home.

CHAPTER XXI

WYNBERG CAMP

IN the middle of December a change of quarters was in store for us. Our occupation of Main Barracks, Cape Town, had only been intended as a temporary measure, and orders were now issued for us to go into Camp at Wynberg. A Highland battalion, returning from India, was to leave, *en route*, one half in Mauritius, and, with the remaining four Companies, to take our place in the capital of the Colony.

While we were excessively glad to get out of Main Barracks, the nuisance of packing up, which had to be again gone through, lay before us. Three or four days sufficed for this, and one afternoon, after an early dinner, we set out by march-route for our new destination.

The village of Wynberg, where the Camp was, lies about eight and a-half miles to the south of Cape Town. It is inland in situation, and is completely sheltered from the furious winds and dust-storms that are so prevalent in the metropolis. This is on account of its natural position at the base of a chain of hills, of which Table Mountain forms a spur. The neighbourhood is a favourite place of residence for merchants and business men in the city, and many of them live here in charming villas with excellent gardens. Its convenient situation—being scarcely half an hour's run by train—and moderate tem-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

perature render it a delightful place of escape from the dust and heat of the town.

Conveyance by train is not an indulgence granted to troops except in case of necessity, and march-route was accordingly the order of the day. It was unpleasantly hot, and, although the road was fairly well sheltered, it was two and a-half hours after starting before the sight of the fringe of white tents denoting the position of the Camp came in view.

Two Companies were fortunate enough to be accommodated in wooden huts, but the rest of us had to be satisfied with tents—in military phraseology, to be placed “under canvas.”

At Wynberg Camp we were quartered in “bell” tents, but were not, from a military manner of looking at it, inconveniently overcrowded in them, as only four men were allotted to each. With this number there was not, of course, space for barrack-room bed-cots; instead of these we had narrow boards resting on low wooden trestles. These afforded a very good makeshift, and I always passed much better nights on these beds, entirely springless as they were, of course, than I had done on the iron cots in quarters at Cape Town. A night in the clear, wholesome air, too, was infinitely more conducive to sleep than one in the fœtid atmosphere of a crowded barrack-room.

As long as the fine weather lasted this open-air life was far from unpleasant, and I felt much better in bodily health than I had done for some time previously. Very often, on hot nights, I used to lie outside altogether, and sleep under the stars. The men in my tent (and it was the custom in nearly all the others as well) had a rooted objection to fresh air, and were deeply imbued with the idea that it was especially dangerous at night. It was no earthly good arguing with them on this matter. They were in the majority, and, to enforce their views, had a highly objectionable habit of tightly lacing up the door, pegging the curtain down, and fastening the flies as soon

WYNBERG CAMP

as they turned in for the night. Their reason for doing this was "to keep the—draught out"! During the rainy season, which arrived a few months later, life under canvas presented itself in a decidedly less favourable light.

The fact of a soldier's liability to spend many months of the year in a tent not being mentioned by the Recruiting-sergeant may, of course, be due to a mere oversight on his part; on the other hand, his discreet reserve on this point may be intentional. The pleasures of dwelling for weeks at a time of wet and cold weather "under canvas" are more than doubtful. As in barrack-rooms where there are no fire-places, so also when quartered in tents, soldiers do not enjoy the allowance of fuel, or, for that matter, of light either, that are dilated upon in "The General Advantages of the Army" placard. The phrase contained therein—"a soldier receives lodging, fuel, and light"—seems to be capable of fairly liberal interpretation.

Our life at Wynberg was an easy and, on the whole, a pleasant one. We had very little to do during the summer; at any rate, in the way of drill, &c. I spent a good deal of my leisure in exploring the surrounding country and seeing something of the peninsula. Many a pleasant excursion I made to places on the coast, and often visited, among others, Mvisenberg, Kalk Bay, and Simon's Town. The railway was a very convenient method of getting into Cape Town when necessary, and I used to frequently avail myself of a pass and spend an evening there.

Just after Christmas—which was celebrated, save for the fact of the hot sun and bright blue sky overhead, in much the same manner as was the previous one in Ireland—the annual course of musketry was commenced. The range was about a mile away, and there we spent a considerable portion of each day. The heat on what was practically the veld, where we used to go to fire, was terrific, and made us all as brown as Red Indians. As

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

soon as the whole battalion had completed the practice, preparations were commenced for taking part in a week's manœuvres, which were to be held in the neighbourhood of Simon's Town.

These were attended by the whole of the Cape Garrison, including the Volunteers, and were under the direction of the General Officer commanding the Forces in the Colony. They entailed a great deal of hard work on the part of all concerned, and were undoubtedly of the greatest use in accustoming us to the routine of a South African campaign.

The first day's march was to Mvisenberg, a little seaside village about eight miles from Wynberg and twice that distance from Cape Town. It was in this neighbourhood that in August, 1795, our troops, under General Craig, fought the decisive battle which won for us the Cape of Good Hope. On our arrival here we halted for the night, and bivouacked on the roadside until the following day. At an early hour the next morning we turned out, and, after a hasty breakfast, continued the march to Simon's Town. This lay about seven miles farther on, but our journey was not at an end on arriving here.

Simon's Town is the chief naval station at the Cape. Although little more than a village, it is, from a strategic point of view, of considerable importance. It is strongly fortified, and contains an arsenal, naval stores, hospital, dock, and refitting yard. The Admiral commanding at the station has his residence here, and there is also a small barracks occupied by a company of Infantry.

Just above the town rises a high and steep hill, and it was to the summit of this that we had to toil before our Camp was reached. The ascent, owing to the narrow and winding paths by which it was made, occupied about an hour and a half, and with the hot sun blazing down upon us, the climb was rather exhausting. When, at length, we had reached the top, a large plateau, with a chain of hills rising on two sides, lay before us. Across

WYNBERG CAMP

the valley rose more hills, and beyond these the open sea leading to Cape Town in the north. We were thus almost at the extreme end of the Cape peninsula.

Our advance party had already pitched the Camp, and we were immediately allotted by Companies to our tents. Sixteen men occupied each, and thus a good deal of crowding was involved. For bedding each man was supplied with a couple of blankets and a waterproof sheet. It was as much as we could do to lay these down in the tents, as almost every inch of space therein was fully taken up by our arms and equipment. However, I secured a position next the door, in order to obtain as much fresh air as possible, and made the best of things.

For the next five or six days we had plenty of work. *Réveille* sounded daily at 5 A.M., and, as soon as breakfast, consisting of bread and coffee, was concluded, we turned out for several hours' skirmishing all over the adjacent country. Outpost duty, attacks on the camp, and manœuvres of all descriptions, filled the greater part of each day. In addition to this we were, on two occasions, suddenly roused at midnight by the notes of the Alarm, ringing out in shrill blasts from the Orderly-bugler. It was rather amusing to note the excitement which this created in a neighbouring Kaffir kraal, the inhabitants of which were evidently under the impression that a hostile tribe was attacking us in earnest.

During the progress of the manœuvres the rations consisted chiefly of preserved meat and biscuits. When fresh beef was issued it was cooked in camp-kettles and served up in the form of a stew. On the subject of cooking a soldier's ideas are of the most primitive description imaginable, and he seems to be absolutely incapable of preparing food in a palatable manner. In camp he takes less trouble about it even than he does in barracks and consequently the meat was always either half raw or else boiled in shreds.

On the afternoon of the sixth day we struck camp and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

commenced the return march. As before, we halted for the night at Mvisenberg, and leaving early on the following morning reached Wynberg about mid-day. Here we were all of us extremely glad to pass a night again on a mattress. Six days of sleeping in one's clothes on the hard ground, with a lump of rock for a pillow, makes one appreciate to the full the comfort of a pair of sheets and a bed.

CHAPTER XXII

PROMOTION: ORDERLY-CORPORAL

AT the beginning of March, learning that there were a couple of vacancies for the rank of Lance-corporal in my Company, it occurred to me that I might as well secure one of them as any one else. I had fifteen months' service now, and, as I secretly cherished an ambition of attaining the rank of Sergeant before old age rendered it quite impossible, it seemed to me to be high time to make a start in my progress up the ladder of promotion. I therefore thought it best to lay my views candidly before the Colour-sergeant of my Company.

The Colour-sergeant is the senior Non-commissioned officer in a Company, and acts as Prime Minister thereof. He keeps the pay and messing accounts of the men, and is responsible for the correct state of their bedding, arms, and accoutrements. This involves a considerable amount of responsibility and a great deal of work. In order to perform it properly he must be an efficient accountant, a strict disciplinarian, and an expert in all matters military. He is the medium between the men composing his Company and the Captain thereof, and is especially charged with the keeping of an ever-watchful eye on the discipline of all ranks below him.

Colour-sergeant Burton was good enough to say that "he didn't see any objection" to my receiving one of the vacant stripes. "As a matter of fact, Robinson," he

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

remarked, in a burst of confidence, "I intended to offer it to you. You've got a clear defaulter-sheet, and a good school certificate, and are a fairly decent shot as well. The Captain wanted me to give it to that ass Peterkin, but I'd just as soon recommend a band-boy as a half-baked idiot like him. If you hadn't spoken about it in time he'd have got it, sure enough. However, I'll speak to Captain Semple about it to-morrow."

The next morning, accompanied by Colour-sergeant Burton, I was brought before the officer commanding my Company for inspection before receiving the seal of his approval as a candidate for promotion.

I very much doubt if Captain Semple knew my name at the time, or, as far as that went, those of half his Company. As officers are so constantly on leave, and, when doing duty, see so little of their men, this was not unnatural. Unless a man is continually distinguishing himself by being brought before him as a prisoner, a Company officer seems to find great difficulty in remembering one from another. His opportunities for really knowing them are not many. He commands a Company on parade, where the men are simply referred to by the numbers which they happen to be temporarily occupying in the ranks, and occasionally goes round a barrack-room. These duties, however, are generally relegated to the Subaltern who assists him.

There is rather a good story that used to be told in Canteens and places whence stories emanate, of this difficulty which Company officers have in recollecting the names of their men. A certain General, so runs the tale, considered that an officer who failed to tell him at once the name of any man of his Company whom he pointed out to him was wanting in a proper amount of interest for their welfare. Accordingly, when the time of General Blank's annual inspection drew near, the officers devoted many anxious hours to committing to memory the names and appearances of their men. As luck would have it, Captain Dash, on his return from leave, found that the

PROMOTION : ORDERLY-CORPORAL

inspection was to take place in three days' time. Being a man of resource, he paraded his Company and informed them of his quandary.

"Now, my men," he remarked confidentially, "I want you to help me about this. When General Blank asks me the names of any of you, you must answer to any that I call you by. Mind you don't make any mistake about it."

The men, entering into the spirit of the joke, promised ready compliance, and Captain Dash continued to hunt and shoot and otherwise enjoy himself, as if Generals' inspections did not concern him in the least. In the meanwhile his brother-officers were hard at work mastering the names of their men.

When the eventful morning arrived Captain Dash was quite at his ease, and delighted the General with the extent of knowledge that he displayed as to his Company and all that concerned its members.

"Who is this, please?" asked General Blank.

"Oh, that's Private Snooks, sir—a very good soldier."

Private Snooks, *né* Fergusson, acknowledged the compliment with a cheerful grin.

"And this?" pointing out another man.

"Private Jenkins, sir—a good shot, that man."

Thereupon "Jenkins," who was the rankest third-class shot that ever vexed the soul of a Colour-sergeant, smiled affably in acknowledgment.

"I'll only trouble you once more, Captain Dash. What is this man's name, and where does he come from?"

"He comes from Cornwall, sir. His name is—er—Trevelyan!"

"Oh indeed, Trevelyan, is it? I'm Cornish myself. Fine country, isn't it my man?"

"Shure, your honour, an' its the foinest country in the wurld, sor!" promptly assented the soi-disant "Trevelyan," otherwise Michael O'Hara from the wilds of Kildare.

Captain Semple, however, did not venture to commit

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

himself in this manner, but was wise enough to inquire my name first from the Colour-sergeant.

"Ah! Private Robinson," he remarked on my appearing before him, "the Colour-sergeant tells me that you—ah—want to be a Lance-corporal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, very well then, I will recommend you to the Colonel. That will do."

I saluted, and went to the Orderly-room to await Colonel Douglas' confirmation of my appointment. The other candidate, a rather quiet man named Murray—for Private Peterkin had suddenly withdrawn his application—accompanied me.

After the prisoners had been disposed of we were ushered by the Sergeant-major into the Colonel's presence. Captain Sample explained that he wished him to make us Lance-corporals, to fill two vacancies in his Company, and produced our defaulter-sheets as evidence of our characters.

"Ah!—h'm!" remarked Colonel Douglas thoughtfully. "You two men wish to become Non-commissioned officers, I hear. Very well, then, mind you do your duty properly. Recommendation confirmed."

"Left turn! Quick march!" said the Sergeant-major, and we emerged in the outer air as Non-commissioned officers.

That night appeared in the "Battalion Orders" an official notification of our appointment. In these terms ran the announcement:

"No. 3 Appointments. The Commanding-officer has been pleased to appoint the undermentioned Privates to be Acting Lance-corporals from this date: No. 4321, Private F. Robinson, and No. 4570, Private T. Murray, 15. 3. 92."

No statesman ever pinned on a decoration with more satisfaction than did I, on returning to my tent, stitch on my right sleeve the single chevron—the outward and visible sign of the Lance-corporal's dignity—of my new rank. Henceforth I was a Non-commissioned officer, and

PROMOTION: ORDERLY-CORPORAL

invested with a certain professional status. That it was one rather low down in the military scale did not trouble me just then, and the deferential manner in which a private addressed me as Corporal very nearly made me offer him a drink.

I remember rather an amusing instance that occurred about this time, which resulted in a newly-fledged and very conceited "Lancer" being effectively taken down a couple of pegs. In the course of some conversation with him one of the men of his Company suddenly happened to exclaim, "When do you want me to draw rations, Smith?"

"Who are you talking to?" demanded the outraged Lance-corporal angrily. "Don't forget to say *Corporal* when you speak to me. I've a handle to my name now."

"All right, old chap. Don't lose your whiskers if you have. A ration-tin's got two, and it's not half so conceited about it," replied the other.

This remark cost its perpetrator fourteen days' imprisonment for "insolence to a Non-commissioned officer," but I have a very strong idea that the Lance-corporal in question received a quiet hint from the Colonel to refrain from standing too much on his dignity.

One of the first of my new experiences as an N.C.O. was that of performing the duties of Company-Orderly-corporal. These duties lasted the whole day long, and consisted, broadly, in parading the Orderly-men to draw rations in the morning and dinners at 12.40 P.M.; ascertaining if any men were "going sick"—that is, in need of medical advice—and, if so, parading them before the doctor; distributing letters and taking documents, &c., to the Company officer. He is also at the beck and call of the Orderly-sergeant and Colour-sergeant, both of whom contrive, by dint of giving him plenty of running about, to guard against his getting into mischief owing to his having too much leisure.

The Orderly-corporal of a Company is, during his tour

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

of such duty, at the service of almost every one. From morning to eve the bugler is engaged in summoning him, now in one direction, now in another. A man is confined in the guard-room, and his dinner is five minutes late in coming to him ; demand the reason why from the Orderly-corporal. The Captain's copy of the Battalion Orders are not received punctually ; send for the Orderly-corporal. The Quarter-master wishes to know how many pairs of socks are required to meet next month's demand ; ascertain from the Orderly-corporal. And this is what goes on from morning to night, until the Orderly-corporal feels so sick of running about that he seriously thinks of resigning his appointment. Fortunately for himself, before he takes this step he generally manages to get into the groove, and finds things going fairly smoothly.

As an N.C.O. I found my position in one particular that had always been exceedingly distasteful to me now completely reversed. Henceforth, instead of performing what were really menial tasks, I superintended their execution by others. This, of course, was an immensely improved condition of affairs, and one that in itself almost sufficed to make the possession of the lance-stripe an attainment worth having. Many men, after their enlistment, are unpleasantly surprised to find that they will have to perform such purely domestic tasks as are implied by the continual "fatigue" duties in barracks. The daily sweeping out of latrines, wash-houses, drains, &c., and all the work in the officers' and sergeants' messes, recreation-rooms, canteens, schools, &c., has to be performed by the troops. No one should object to doing his share towards the cleaning of his own barrack-room, but the washing up of crockery, knife-polishing, blackleading fire-places, window-cleaning, &c., in the mess-rooms and canteens, under the orders of the waiters, who are of the same rank as themselves, is naturally considered most distasteful by the better class of recruits. That I should be washing up cups and saucers in a supper-bar a month after my enlistment had never remotely

PROMOTION: ORDERLY-CORPORAL

occurred to me. When I thought about it afterwards it seemed to me that it was calculated to qualify a man for a position as housemaid rather than for one as a soldier. At cleaning lamp-glasses and polishing stove-doors, &c., a recruit soon grows to be rather expert. At any rate, in the performance of these various domestic offices he has plenty of practice.

Another great change to my advantage lay in the fact that sentry-go was now, for me, a thing of the past. The Lance-corporal of a guard is second in command thereof. His duties consist, under the Sergeant, in posting the reliefs and attending to the confinement of prisoners as they are brought in. These little matters are more than sufficient to occupy all his time, and consequently he does not get much rest on guard. While the men have four clear hours to themselves between their terms of sentry-duty, the Lance-corporal has to go round the posts with a fresh relief every two hours. He has also to accompany the Orderly or other officer once by day and once by night to hear the sentries' orders. During his tour of duty he goes round the posts about sixteen times—a circumstance that on some guards involves about ten miles' walking. It is almost impossible for him to get any sleep at night, as the necessity of turning out every two hours would alone prevent this. By the time that the guard is relieved the next morning he naturally feels rather tired, and, if a tour of duty as Orderly-corporal happens to be waiting for him on his return to barracks, he is not particularly pleased with the arrangement of things in general. Lance-corporals, too, on account of the small number of them available for duty, are generally on guard more often than are N.C.O.s of higher rank or privates.

As a probationer, a Lance-corporal receives no extra-duty pay, but, on confirmation of his appointment, he is, when there is a vacancy, taken on the establishment (thirty-two in each battalion) of this rank. He is then granted threepence daily, in addition to his regimental

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

pay. The road to higher promotion, as full Corporal, and, eventually, Sergeant and Colour-sergeant, or perhaps still more exalted rank, then lies before him.

The ladder of promotion is a long and weary one up which to travel, and many a "Lancer" gives it up in disgust ere he has even made a fair start. Of course it is very foolish to act in this manner, but the men who do so are probably unfitted for advancement to the higher grades.

The stripe of the Lance-corporal is a tender plant, and one that requires careful nourishment should its owner entertain any ambition of its conversion in course of time into two. As for three, with the dignity and privileges accruing to that lofty position, the bare idea, as viewed from the humble niche occupied by the last-made "Lancer," appears presumption. They forget, however, that they must have one stripe before they can get two, and likewise two before they will have three. Even Sergeant-majors were private soldiers once, improbable though it may appear to the newly-joined recruit.

Is it worth while to take the "stripe"? is the problem with which the prospective N.C.O. is confronted when the subject is first broached by his Colour-sergeant. The *pros* and *cons* afford him a good deal of food for reflection. The Colour-sergeant assists the Company officer, the Orderly-sergeant assists the Colour-sergeant, and the Orderly-sergeant is, in turn, assisted by the Orderly-corporal, while it appears to be no one's especial duty to assist this latter. Undoubtedly the position is not a "soft" one—the kicks (metaphorically) are many, and the half-pence (literally) are few. The responsibilities in connection with the ranks are often serious. He frequently find himself the only Non-commissioned officer in a barrack-room, and is, accordingly, held accountable for any breach of discipline that is committed.

Owing to his limited powers with regard to confining men on his own authority, he has sometimes a great deal of difficulty in maintaining proper order. Most private

PROMOTION: ORDERLY-CORPORAL

soldiers have a profound veneration for long service, and a wholesome respect for the power invested in the position of "Effective" rank that is possessed by Corporals and Sergeants. But with regard to young Lance-corporals of the same amount of service as themselves, their views seem to be rather different. They know very well that they are N.C.O.s in little more than name (officially speaking, Lance-corporals are privates, for the reason that their position is an "appointment" and not a rank), and they, accordingly, extend to them only just as much respect as they consider absolutely necessary for the safety of their own skins. The consequence is that some of these young Lance-corporals who are not sufficiently strong-minded to stand no nonsense of this sort frequently chafe under thinly veiled indignities, which, if offered in a tenth degree to a Corporal or a Sergeant, would result in the speedy consignment of such people to the guard-room. Fortunately, individuals of this sort sometimes find that they are the victims of a delusion. In these instances they learn, from the bitter experience of a term of hard labour in the nearest military prison, or so many days' "Confinement to Barracks," the much-needed lesson that the authority of even a Lance-corporal cannot be disregarded with impunity.

CHAPTER XXIII

A LONG VOYAGE

AND now the time for some months passed uneventfully enough. About July the rainy season set in, and, until the following October, it rained hard and it rained often. The tremendous downpours, lasting for hours at a time, that took place at this time of the year were quite a new experience to us. The ground was like a swamp, and the roads and paths became rapidly converted into miniature rivers. All the same, a serious nuisance as it was to us who were still under canvas, this rain was most beneficial to the country. For nearly nine months in the year scarcely a drop of moisture falls in this part of the Colony, and cattle disease, or "rinderpest," and locust plague, are consequently very rife. Without this periodical rainy season, the farmers would be ruined.

A year passed away, with little to break its monotony. Musketry, field-training, and manœuvres occupied a good deal of time. At the commencement of the summer I spent a very pleasant three months with my Company, on detachment at Simon's Town. The barracks were small, but we were not crowded, and the excellent facilities that existed for bathing and fishing made the station a most popular one with the men.

In the month of September, almost two years after our arrival in the Colony, information as to our next move was sent from England.

A LONG VOYAGE

Beyond a rather indefinite intimation, in the earlier part of the year, that we should leave South Africa about this month no positive instructions on the subject had as yet been notified. Consequently, the news that our departure was to take place almost immediately occasioned a good deal of excitement.

It had been generally understood that, as we were still on the Colonial roster for service abroad, our next move would be either to Natal or else to Canada. This may seem rather a curious sequence of stations, but it is by no means unusual for battalions to be sent from one extreme of climate to another. For troops to move from Halifax (Nova Scotia) to Mauritius, Malta, or South Africa appears to be a favourite arrangement on the part of the authorities.

Our new station, however, was authoritatively stated to be Gibraltar. Accordingly we had to set to work at once to make the necessary preparations for another long voyage. In the middle of November our transport, which on this occasion was H.M. Troopship *Himalaya*, arrived. Two days afterwards we were once more upon the high seas.

The voyage was much the same, as far as the routine and arrangements of the ship went, as that which we had already undertaken. We were not, however, favoured on this occasion by such good weather as had been the case with us on our passage to Cape Town. Off Ascension Island, where we put in to land some stores, the sea was so rough that we were delayed there nearly a day and a half. At St. Helena we disembarked some Artillery, whom we had brought from the Cape, and took on board some Engineers, bound for England. As before, we coaled at St. Vincent, and there renewed our acquaintance with the native divers.

Our previous experience of troopship travelling now stood us in good stead, and we managed to settle down at an earlier period than had formerly been the case. The rough weather which we met with on starting made most of the troops very uncomfortable for the first few days, but I had evidently got my sea legs by this time, as I was

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

not troubled at all. We had still the old evils and discomforts of overcrowding and bad feeling to contend against. It is not at all creditable to the Government to permit troops at sea to be so pressed for want of room. The way in which the women and children were herded together was positively indecent. A contagious disease would spread through a troopship with frightful rapidity. In time of accident, too, not one half of those on board could be saved. Until some disaster does take place it is probable that these things will go on in the old stereotyped fashion.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth day the far-famed "Rock" was declared in sight, and it was said that we should be at anchor in the harbour there by dinner-time. Although I looked most diligently in the direction pointed out to me by one of the sailors, I could, at the time, see nothing in any way suggestive of land. However, the number of gulls settling on the rigging convinced me that we were near a coast.

About two hours afterwards the outline of the "Rock" was plainly visible, and, by dinner-time, as had been predicted, we were indeed gliding through the beautiful bay, the revolutions of the screw growing fainter every moment, and finally ceasing altogether, as we were moored alongside the New Mole. Instinctively I thought of Browning's line,

"In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar,
grand and grey,"

and realised to the full its wonderful appropriateness.

The first glimpse of Gibraltar from the sea is not easily forgotten. Its beautiful appearance coming suddenly into sight as we rounded a corner of the coast was almost a revelation to us. Instead of a rough-hewn and forbidding mass of rock, rising abruptly from the waves, we saw a large hill, in great part covered with vegetation, sloping gently down to the edge of a very beautiful bay. At different altitudes were mounted powerful batteries, while

A LONG VOYAGE

the numerous embrasures cut in the surface of the solid rock betrayed the existence of others. At the base nestled the town, the streets of which rose in tiers to a considerable elevation. A long line of fortifications, flanked by bomb-proof batteries, formed its boundary from the sea. Here, riding at anchor or moored to buoys, were ships of every nationality and description—from an English man-of-war to a Moorish fruit-barge. And over all, from the signal-station at the summit, floated the Union Jack.

There is, I know, a deeply-rooted impression in most people's minds that Gibraltar is but a barren and uninviting rock. This idea is totally erroneous, as Gibraltar is really very fertile and a great part of the rock is covered with vegetation. Flowers especially abound all over its surface, and the gardens of the Alameda, the Convent, and the Mount are renowned even in Spain for their great beauty. Fruit, too, is very plentiful, and prickly pears, figs, oranges, and lemons grow in abundance almost everywhere. A great deal of this cultivation serves a double purpose, and in many places luxuriant banks of tropical flowers completely hide from view batteries of frowning guns, and green banks covered with shrubs and plants mask piles of shell.

As we entered the Bay our approach was signalled by the troopship flag (blue and yellow squares) flying from the look-out at the top of the "Rock" as soon as the *Himalaya* was made fast to her moorings. His Excellency the Governor and his Staff, who had been waiting on the wharf, came on board and congratulated the Colonel on the appearance of the troops.

We soon learned that we should have to spend a couple of hours in harbour while our quarters ashore were being prepared for us. The interval, accordingly, was devoted to the furbishing up of arms and accoutrements and making final preparations for landing.

As soon as the anchor had been dropped a crowd of small boats surrounded the ship. From a few of these

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

some Spaniards, with baskets of fruit, cigars, &c., were permitted to come on board, and these drove a roaring trade. Oranges and sweet lemons, with fresh figs, raisins, and nuts, were willingly exchanged by the handful for a couple of pence a time. The troops were particularly captivated by the cheapness of the tobacco, which, as this is a duty-free port, is here sold at exactly one-third of the price charged for the same tobacco at home. Very fair cigars were obtainable for a penny a piece, while cigarettes of native manufacture cost but three halfpence a bundle of twenty-five. After the prohibitive tariff for these goods that prevailed in Cape Town this immense reduction was naturally very much appreciated.

At three o'clock in the afternoon we disembarked, and formed up on the New Mole parade-ground. This was reached by a flight of steps guarded by a drawbridge and big double gates. A brief inspection ensued, and on its conclusion the march to our quarters was commenced. The South Barracks, where we were to be stationed, are situated towards the southern end of Gibraltar and are approached by a steep road leading from the New Mole. The beauty of the view obtainable from the parade-ground here, overlooking as it does both Spain and Africa, is very great. But it is not always considered as a compensation for the stiff climb that it first involves by many a hard-pressed soldier who is hurrying up it at night in order to avoid being proclaimed as an absentee.

The building, which is now used as quarters for troops, was formerly a Capuchin monastery, and is of considerable antiquity. It is constructed of stone throughout, covered with yellow plaster, and is exceedingly massive. The barrack-rooms were very large, and by no means comfortably arranged. However, they were fairly clean, and were, at any rate, infinitely superior to those in which we had lived at Cape Town. In my room there were about forty men, which, while too many to be properly looked after by two full Corporals and myself, who were

A LONG VOYAGE

the only N.C.O.s sleeping there, did not inconveniently overcrowd it.

The first thing to attend to was the getting up of as much of the baggage as possible before it should become too dark to do anything in this way. While we had been taking possession of our rooms, fatigue parties from the other battalions in the garrison had been at work in getting the baggage on to the mule-carts, which were then brought into barracks by their drivers.

The Native Transport Corps in Gibraltar is a most efficient one. It is semi-military in its organisation, and is under the Army Service Corps Department. The mules that they use are fine, hard-working animals, and their native drivers do their work very well. Altogether, the transport arrangements in Gibraltar were vastly superior to those of the troublesome and incapable system in Cape Town, with its lazy and useless gangs of Kaffirs, and their lumbering ox-waggons.

So well had every one worked that by tattoo that night we had all got our kits, and had, to a certain extent, settled down in our new quarters. A description of what "soldiering" in Gibraltar at this period was like must be accorded a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOLDIERING IN GIBRALTAR

THE chief duty of an Infantry battalion in Gibraltar seems to be that of finding the numerous sentries which are daily required to furnish the Garrison guards there. In this respect the duty was harder than it had been even in Dublin. A chain of sentries extended round three sides of the fortress ; the fourth was happily considered to be sufficiently protected by the sheer precipice crowned with a battery which rose from the sea to a height of nearly 1,500 feet. Every few yards, apparently, on the two sides looking towards the Spanish mainland and the waters of the Bay, was a guard-room, in front of which a sentry paced his weary beat throughout the day and night. On account of the numerous batteries and magazines that existed everywhere—some of them in the most unexpected positions—one could scarcely walk a distance of a hundred yards in any part of the “Rock” without coming across a sentry. This guard-duty, which is most fatiguing, especially in the heat of the summer months, has been cut down considerably during the last few years, with the result that the number of men required daily to furnish sentries has been very much reduced.

While my battalion was stationed there the guards on the frontier alone, lying between the outer gates of the fortress and the mainland of Spain, consisted every day

SOLDIERING IN GIBRALTAR

of two officers, eight non-commissioned officers, and thirty-nine men. As the remaining guards absorbed at least another hundred men it naturally followed that we seldom enjoyed more than four or five consecutive nights in bed, while, for half the year, I was on guard eight times during a month.

Just outside the boundary gates—the Bayside Barrier by name—lies a large low-lying tract of ground—really an isthmus—known as the North Front. On one side is the Mediterranean Sea, and, on the other, the Bay of Gibraltar. Between the boundary of this isthmus and the entrance to the frontier town of La Linea is a strip of sandy soil, about three-quarters of a mile in length and half that in breadth. This is the “Neutral Ground”—a sort of No Man’s Territory. On the North Front side is a line of English sentries, and, on the La Linea side, a chain of Spanish *Guardias* keep watch and ward. The space between the two, from a distance of about one hundred yards to the front of each line of sentries, is beyond the suzerainty of either nation. On the English border are two large guards, known as the North West and the North Front; while, on the right flank, are two smaller ones—the North East and the Devil’s Tower. Altogether, our portion is fairly well looked after.

The North Front is largely used as a garrison parade and recreation ground, and contains the musketry ranges, waterworks, Commissariat buildings, and military and civilian cemetery for the whole garrison. In the western portion is an encampment of hutments and a small hospital. A flank of the famous galleries cut out of the solid rock at a height of about seven hundred feet from the ground faces the Spanish territory, almost the whole of which can be swept by the guns in position here. An attack on the fortress from the mainland must necessarily result in failure. No force could withstand the terrible fire to which it would be exposed, while the gunners themselves would be fully protected. It is said that in time of siege the whole garrison and civil population,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

amounting to about 25,000, could be stationed in these galleries, which are stored with sufficient water and provisions to last for some years.

During the greater part of this summer I was a good deal away from South Barracks, as my Company spent seven months in the first year there on detachment. The first move that we made was to a place called Catalan Bay.

This is a small fishing village on the east side of the "Rock." Although the inhabitants spoke Spanish, they were really of Genoese descent, and still preserved most of their old customs and a considerable trace of their former tongue. They numbered only about one hundred, and the two rows of houses in which they lived were locally known as No. 1 and No. 2 streets. The barracks here were not very imposing, and consisted only of two small rooms, with separate accommodation for the Colour-sergeant and the officer who accompanied us. Boating, bathing, and fishing very pleasantly filled up the greater part of the day for us. These amusements could be very easily indulged in, as one could almost step out of the barrack-room and on to the shore. The place struck me as being very similar to Simon's Town, except of course for the absence of anything in the way of naval power.

On leaving Catalan Bay we moved to the North Front encampment, where we spent the next four months. Here we were quartered in fairly comfortable wooden huts. These contained two rooms, each accommodating twenty men, with a bunk for a Non-commissioned officer between them. As at Catalan Bay, here also we could boat and bathe to our hearts' content. At the former place, however, it was in the Mediterranean Sea that we did this, while at North Front Camp it was in the Bay of Gibraltar, which is watered by the Atlantic. The proximity of the Camp to the frontier guards and the garrison parade and recreation ground was very convenient for us, as it saved the long walk to these places from South Barracks.

SOLDIERING IN GIBRALTAR

Almost the only objection to being on these two detachments lay in the fact that they were both outside the barrier gates. The consequence was that the troops occupying them were prevented from entering the town after Retreat. Every night at sunset, or "Retreat," an official, styled the "Key-sergeant," walked round the fortress with a big bunch of keys. In his train followed an escort of two privates and a corporal, while a bugler or drummer preceded him, to give warning of his approach. A continual locking of gates and raising of drawbridges, by which at night the fortress is secured from hostile invasion, then ensued.

It was certainly rather a nuisance to arrive at one of the barriers just after the Key-sergeant had passed, and to find that one could go no further until *réveille* the next morning, when they would be opened again. I never envied the Key-sergeant his appointment, as it seemed to be designed to entirely prevent his ever having any asleep at all. During the day he was employed as a clerk in the Brigade office, and at night he had to go his rounds, which involved a walk of some miles. Then, at two o'clock in the morning he had to open the gates at the dock-yard, and the remaining ones at *réveille*. In addition to this, it often happened that certain gates, at the Ragged Staff, on the Waterport Wharf, had to be opened at all sorts of unearthly hours for the convenience of officers returning from some festivities in Spain. The emoluments of the post—about six shillings per diem, with quarters, &c.—made it highly sought after by most Non-commissioned officers. Nevertheless, I should not have applied for it myself, even if I had held sufficient rank to be a candidate for it.

Little military duty, other than sentry-go could be performed on the "Rock." Route-marching was here practically impossible, although on several occasions we displayed our ability in climbing, by toiling up the steep road leading to the signal-station at the summit.

This road, which was commenced during the latter end

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

of the last century, was made in rather a curious manner. The forced labour of the troops compulsorily employed on it had such poor results that another plan had to be adopted. Acting on the principle that a volunteer is always worth three times as much as a pressed man, the Governor at that time intimated that sentences of corporal punishment might be commuted in the case of those who would offer their services in this work. Numbers of men accepted this condition, and remission of punishment was granted at the rate of one hundred lashes for a day's labour. Thus literally by the price of blood was the construction of this road effected.

The view to be gained from this point is well worth the trouble entailed in reaching, and is probably one of the finest in the world. From the edge of the battery here can be seen on the one side two mighty continents—Europe and Africa. The snow-capped Sierra Nevadas are plainly visible, as are the numerous Spanish hamlets nestling in the cork woods in the fertile valleys on the slopes. Below one lies the town, its red roofs and white-walled houses, built tier upon tier, stretching down to the very edge of the sea. At Europa Point in the extreme south, the blue waters of the Bay of Gibraltar mingle with those of the Mediterranean. Its calm surface is broken at intervals by the white sails of passing schooners, while farther away where the sea line cuts the water the smoke of outward-bound steamers may also be seen. With the aid of the signalman's powerful telescope the observer will be able to make out the walls of Tangier, gleaming in the sun, fourteen miles distant across the Straits, and Ceuta, too, is also plainly visible.

On the other side one gazes down a sheer precipice, some 1,400 feet in height, to the Mediterranean Sea, which here washes its sandy base. The peaks of Ceuta, too, seem in the clear air startlingly near. A number of Barbary apes, which may here be seen frisking about from crag to crag, are held by the learned to be confirmation of the theory that in ancient days Gibraltar was joined to

SOLDIERING IN GIBRALTAR

the coast of North Africa. The narrow straits formerly known as the "Pillars of Hercules" now seem calm enough, and scarcely a ripple disturbs their surface, on which lie becalmed a Spanish felucca or two.

The front face of the rock of Gibraltar, as viewed from the Bay, is a beautiful and picturesque sight, but for impressiveness and magnitude of the panorama unfolded it is not to be compared with that which presents itself from this signal-station at the summit.

CHAPTER XXV

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS ON THE "ROCK"

IN the month of June I had climbed to the top of the roll of "unpaid" Lance-corporals, and received the first vacancy for promotion to "paid" rank. The immediate result of this was that my income was now increased by 7s. 6d. monthly. Although Lance-corporals are technically Non-commissioned officers, their permanent grade is that of private, and for misconduct they can always be reverted to such by order of their Commanding-officer. Moreover, this may be done without trial by court-martial, as is necessary before Non-commissioned officers of effective rank (Corporals and Sergeants) can be reduced to a lower grade.

The reversion to the ranks of two of my immediate seniors, who had distinguished themselves by getting shut out at the Bayside Barrier, and were consequently several hours absent from their duty, afforded an opportunity for both my friend Murray and myself to become substantive Lance-corporals. In the Service, as in other walks of life, one man's downfall is often another's benefit, and to this circumstance my promotion in this instance was due. I had still, however, to climb over the heads of thirty before getting my next step, and of a further forty before attaining the rank of Sergeant—that is, between myself and this rank stood seventy senior Non-commissioned officers.

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS ON THE "ROCK"

As regards their financial prospects, soldiers of all ranks in Gibraltar are in rather a peculiar position. The money required weekly for the men's pay is issued from the bank in *sterling*, but, as Spanish coin only is current there, it is disbursed to the men in dollars, half-dollars (escudos), pesetas (10*d.*), and copper centimos. As English coin is worth more than Spanish, the difference in value between the two amounts on large sums of money to an appreciable total.

Again, this difference, or "currency," as it is generally known, is settled by the state of the money market at the time, and fluctuates daily. For instance, five Spanish dollars, or twenty-five pesetas, are usually reckoned as being equivalent to £1 Spanish, but an English sovereign may one day be worth six dollars and the next twenty-seven pesetas. The currency is seldom less than 1*s.* 6*d.* in the pound, while, when there is a great demand for gold in the market, it rises to as much as 4*s.* 10*d.* or 5*s.* By intelligently applying this principle one could sometimes derive a profit therefrom. Thus, if a man pays an English sovereign into the Post Office Savings Bank there when the rate of exchange is 4*s.* in the pound he would be credited with a deposit of thirty pesetas; if, on drawing this out, the rate happened to have fallen to 1*s.* 8*d.*, he would then receive twenty-eight pesetas, or £1 2*s.* 6*d.* Spanish. But this cuts both ways, as, when I was leaving the station, I withdrew my accumulated deposits of £4 16*s.* sterling, then equal to 125 pesetas (£5 Spanish), for which, in converting it into sterling money, the currency being then 2*s.* 6*d.* in the pound, I only received £4 7*s.* 6*d.*, thus losing 13*s.* on the transaction.

As all goods in the Canteen and in the shops in the town were sold at local prices, for Spanish money, it was not really worth a man's while to change into sterling the few shillings he drew weekly. The money-changers, too, would probably have declined to accept less than half a sovereign at a time. With regard to the total pay of an

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

entire Company, however, it was a very different thing. This would have amounted to about £190 monthly, on which the currency, at as low an average rate as 2s. 6d. in the pound, came to the very respectable sum of nearly £24.

The application of this money occasioned a good deal of heart-burning. In my battalion it was put to many uses for the men's benefit. Each Company was provided with a six-oared boat, which later on had to be disposed of at a ruinous sacrifice; the compulsory stoppage of 1s. 4d. monthly from each man's pay for washing and hair-cutting was abolished, as also was the item of "barrack damages"; the messing underwent a considerable change for the better, cricket and football gear was given liberally, and the expense of an occasional outing into Spain borne by this fund.

At first all went well, and the men were much pleased with this new order of things. In course of time, however, it became painfully manifest that there was a good deal of looseness about the way in which the system was worked. For instance, there seemed to be no uniformity about the amounts distributed among the different Companies. In some it was almost impossible to get a cricket-ball, while in others picnics and cricket matches were organised on a most liberal scale. It was contended, too, that some of the Colour-sergeants, in whose hands the expenditure of the fund was left, were reaping an undue advantage therefrom.

This was as likely as not a calumny; only the fact remains that these Non-commissioned officers gave one the idea of being rather more opulent than circumstances altogether warranted. In fact, Gibraltar was at this time a veritable El Dorado for them. The lack of proper supervision over the Company "currency funds" led to a good many abuses, and reform in its administration was urgently required.

To a Scotch regiment, where the men are always very particular where "bawbees" are concerned, lay the credit

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS ON THE "ROCK"

of instituting a different order of things. Shortly after their arrival in the garrison the battalion was inspected by the General, who inquired of some of the men if they were satisfied with the working of the system then in force. In reply he received a few plain truths, which led to the immediate promulgation of an order that in future each man should receive in cash the currency due on his month's pay. This being adopted throughout the garrison meant a monthly increase of income to the extent of about three shillings to a private, seven shillings to a Corporal, and half a sovereign to a Sergeant.

Of course, with the currency paid direct, the cost of the extra messing, with cricketing gear, and all the other etceteras which we had been hitherto enjoying, had for the future to be derived from other sources. But this scarcely mattered, as the Canteen funds, which in this station amounted to about £900 a year, very well bore this.

CHAPTER XXVI

EXCURSIONS INTO SPAIN

FROM the private soldier's point of view Gibraltar is little better than a prison. From one year's end to another he is practically confined to a territory about three miles in length and three-quarters of a mile in its greatest width. Except for the rare occasions of, in summer, joining a picnic party into Spain he can never leave the boundaries of the fortress. As a Non-commissioned officer, however, I was frequently enabled to obtain leave to make expeditions into the surrounding country. Among other places within easy distance of the "Rock" were the neighbouring towns of La Linea, San Roque, and Campamento. On one occasion I crossed the Bay for the purpose of witnessing a bull-fight at Algeciras.

Here there is one of the most famous rings in the South of Spain. Every Sunday afternoon during the season—for there is "a season" for bull-fighting, just as there is for hunting and shooting—was given up to the national sport of the country. Curiosity to see for myself how this was conducted induced me to be present on this occasion. Before the day's proceedings were over, however, I regretted having gone, for the cruelty inseparably connected with bull-fighting—or rather bull-torturing—is most repugnant to Englishmen. Until I personally witnessed one of these exhibitions I had always been under the impression that the stories of cruelty and the sufferings

EXCURSIONS INTO SPAIN

entailed on the horses were grossly exaggerated, but when I saw for myself the horrors of the Plaza De Tors on this bright Sunday afternoon my preconceived opinions on the subject were entirely changed.

Outside the vast amphitheatre was a huge crowd of gaily-dressed holiday-makers. Dark-eyed young *senoritas* with their mothers—the more mature *senoras*—were there in large numbers. Each wore the *mantilla*, which even under the hottest sun is all that protects the heads of Spanish women, while in their hands they carried the indispensable fan. A troop of light Cavalry—all sky-blue uniforms and silver lace, with jingling spurs and flashing sabres—kept guard at the entrance. Herdsmen and peasants, grandees and merchants, with the *olla podrida* of a Spanish crowd, poured in in one unceasing stream.

In order to obtain a good seat I hastened inside, and, paying a dollar for admission, entered that portion known as the *sombra*. By this I avoided the sun, which, as there was no roof to the building, made the cheaper parts of the "house" anything but pleasant in which to sit for any length of time.

If the crowd outside was large, inside it was simply enormous, and yet others still clamoured for admission, even though the "House full" boards had long been displayed at the doors.

It was a brilliant scene that lay before one. The vast amphitheatre, with its circles of seats rising in tiers from the boundary of the ring to the summit of the building, was densely packed with an immense audience. Flags were flying everywhere; fans fluttered continuously; the men smoked their *cigarillos*, and from all sides rose a continual hum of conversation which not even the energetic performances of a military band served in the least to disturb. In every quarter of the building there was the greatest good humour and general air of enjoyment. Even the more aristocratic portion of the spectators who sat in state in private boxes were not above

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

exchanging remarks with their more humble neighbours in the less pretentious seats below them. When holiday-making the most dignified Castilian seems to unbend somewhat, and to lose a little of his natural punctiliousness.

The performance on this occasion was under the especial patronage of the Mayor and Corporation of Algeciras. When that functionary and the civic party entered and took their seats in their box, the whole audience rose to their feet with shouts of *Viva l'España*, while the band brayed out a few bars of the National Anthem. His Excellency, with many bows, gracefully acknowledged the salutation, and smiling sweetly at all present gave the signal for the commencement of the proceedings.

As a preliminary, the *toreadors* advanced in a body, followed by the horsemen, or *picadors*, who, bowing low, handed up to the municipal box their lances for inspection. The Mayor, having felt their points with the tips of his delicately gloved fingers, signified his approval of their condition, and dismissed their carriers.

These lances, which are really goads, consist of long wooden shafts at the top of which are short spikes about four inches in length. The *picadors* are provided with them for the purpose of irritating a sullen bull who refuses to show fight until, goaded by the continued torment, he lowers his head and wildly charges his persecutors.

Next came the *matadors*, gorgeously clad in heavily gold-embroidered jackets, with beautiful lace ruffles, velvet knee-breeches, and silk stockings, with buckled shoes. Such men are the *élite* of the ring. Their sole weapon is a short sword, or *espada*, with which, single-handed, they engage the bull. The chief of them, on whom devolves the task of giving the animal the *coup-de-grace*, is a very great personage indeed in the opinion of the audience. They are handsome, athletic men, swift of foot and sure of eye, as well they may be, for a single false step or the

EXCURSIONS INTO SPAIN

waver of an eyelid at the critical moment would probably occasion them a horrible death.

The horses on which the *picadors* are mounted are the most shocking specimens of horse-flesh ever met with outside a knacker's yard, and the animals in the shafts of a Pirate 'bus would consider themselves everlastingly disgraced if they chanced to be seen in the same street with them. Their bodies are almost invariably a mass of sores and open wounds, and often, even under the torture of the cruel spurs of their riders, they can scarcely hobble round the ring. The unhappy brutes seem to know what is before them, and, blindfolded as they are, refuse to move until the sharp jabs of their rider's long rowel make the blood pour from their trembling flanks. When at length the procession round the ring had been concluded the signal was given, and the doors leading to the stables where the bulls were confined were suddenly thrown open.

Urged forward by a vicious stab from the pitchfork of a herdsman, the first animal rushed into the arena. Here he stood still for a moment, angrily pawing the ground in front of him. The fierce sunlight dazzled his eyes and undecided him in which direction to move. For several days past he had been closely confined in a low dark stable, and supplied with but little food and water. Consequently his passions were now roused to their utmost pitch, and he was only waiting until he could determine in which direction to make his first onslaught.

But this passiveness did not please the audience: they had paid for their seats and naturally wanted to see some "sport." Accordingly, they called imperiously upon the men in the ring to exhibit their skill in engaging the bull. At the summons one of them stole gently up, and quickly inserted about two inches of his pointed lance into the animal's flank. This had the desired effect, and instantly the bull, with lowering head and flashing tail, turned on his tormentor.

At the same moment a *matador* rushed swiftly across the arena, and waving his cloak in front of the maddened

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

creature's eyes, sought to distract his attention, while the first reached safety by clambering over one of the barriers that are placed at intervals round the ring. One cannot help being struck by the magnificent courage displayed by these swordsmen, in stepping forward, without a moment's hesitation, to assist a comrade.

The *matador* himself was now in danger. He was on foot, and armed only with a short sword, which he had not yet even drawn. In his hands he carried a couple of darts, and with these he intended to check the savage and semi-wild bull. Quick as thought he jumped aside, as the animal bent his head for the fatal charge, and neatly planted them on each side of his neck. These *bandarillos* are about three feet in length, and are plentifully bedizened with ribbons streaming from their shafts.

At this moment a *picador*, urging his unwilling steed into a sort of shambling trot by an application of his big rowelled spurs, approached. His purpose was to distract the infuriated animal's attention from the *matador*, who would then be able to seek a safer position.

The tactics of the former in drawing the bull's attention to himself were eminently successful. With an angry bellow of mingled rage and pain the animal again lowered his head and rushed upon his new adversary. In vain did the rider now strive to urge his horse forward to escape. The trembling brute, paralysed with fear and the smell of blood, stood stock-still in the centre of the ring, his flanks heaving, and quivering in every limb. Seeing that his horse was doomed, the rider jumped off just in time to escape the bull's horns. These his wretched steed received instead. With a horrible rip, ripping sound—exactly like tearing a sheet of calico in a draper's shop—these plunged into its body. A cloud of dust arose at the moment, and when it had cleared away I saw the unhappy animal staggering round the ring, with its entrails protruding on to the ground, from a great gaping hole in its belly. Sickening as was the sight, yet not the faintest sign of pity or concern for the poor

EXCURSIONS INTO SPAIN

creature's sufferings was depicted on a single face around me. The ladies waved their fans languidly and consumed sweatmeats as calmly as if they were in church. The *picador* leaned coolly against the side of a barricade while his steed, which had fallen to the ground again, was wildly kicking out its legs in its dying agonies. Callous shouts of "*Bueno toro! Otro caballo!*" ("Good bull! Another horse!") mingled with the plaudits of the onlookers.

All this took but a few seconds to occur. The bull stood panting in the centre of the ring, his legs planted firmly on the ground, his flanks heaving convulsively, and blood pouring from his nostrils and the numerous wounds on his body. But he was not by any means done for yet, there was still plenty of fight left in him. Accordingly he lashed his tail fiercely, while he rolled his head from side to side, as if challenging his tormentors to do their worst.

This was the opportunity of the *matador*. Upon him now devolved the killing of the bull with a single stroke of his sword. The task was one calling for the greatest judgment and nerve on the part of the operator, but the *matador* who had been engaged on this occasion was one of the most renowned of his class. He was the hero of more than a hundred triumphs in the ring, and received from his profession the income of an ambassador. With the utmost assurance he walked quietly towards the centre of the arena.

A rose, thrown from a lady's dress, fluttered through the air and fell at his feet. Picking it up, he pressed it melodramatically to his lips, bowed to the fair donor, and placed it in his jacket. Then, lighting a cigarette, he drew his sword and calmly awaited the onslaught.

With lowered head and tail in air the enraged and tortured animal gave a tremendous bellow and rushed impetuously at his enemy. Like a statue stood the *matador*, scarce fifteen paces away. When the bull was within three feet of him, and the tips of his long horns

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

almost touching his embroidered jacket, he suddenly stepped lightly aside and, with an almost imperceptible movement of the arm, buried his keen blade to the hilt in the brute's neck.

The bull halted in a moment, but the man, standing perfectly still with his arms folded, did not deign to move. He had made his stroke : his well-tried sword could not fail him. The animal suddenly staggered forward on his knees, opened his mouth, and gave voice to a half-choked bellow ; a torrent of blood rushed from his ears and nostrils, his flanks heaved, and the next moment he fell forward on the ground, gave a final kick with his legs, and then rolled quietly over on his side. The fight was at an end.

Stepping up to the carcase, the *matador* withdrew his weapon, wiped the blade on the soil, and, placing one foot on the dead animal's flank, took off his cap and bowed gracefully. The audience leapt to their feet, thundering their applause, while a stream of flowers and jewellery from the ladies rained down upon him. Admiring as I did the undoubted coolness and bravery of the man, this theatrical display was rather offensive.

A bugle was now sounded, the doors again opened, and a team of mules, with bells jingling from their harness, trotted in. The carcasses of the mangled horse and the dead bull were dragged away ; fresh sand was scattered over the blood-stained soil ; the band played a lively overture, and preparations were made for the dispatch of bull number two.

I, however, had seen quite enough now, and had no appetite for more horrors of this sort. Accordingly, I made my way into the open air as quickly as possible.

Outside in the bright sunshine the recollection of what I had just witnessed surged upon me in full force, and the remembrance of it almost made me ill. The sound of that horrible rip, rip rang in my ears, and the spectacle of the wretched dis-bowelled horse, treading on its entrails as it staggered round the arena in its dying agonies, rose

EXCURSIONS INTO SPAIN

before me. The whole spectacle was most repugnant, and I cannot understand how English ladies—and there were several of them there that afternoon—could sit still and witness such horrors.

Bull-fights are the national "sport" of Spain, and enjoy the highest patronage of the country. The women, too, seem to be just as interested in them as are the men, and children of the most tender years accompany their parents, as a matter of course, to the ring on Sunday afternoons. This probably accounts, in great measure, for the cruelty with which the average Spaniard is accustomed to treat his horses and dogs.

CHAPTER XXVII

A TRIP TO TANGIER

A MORE pleasant expedition than that just described was the one that I made shortly afterwards to Tangier. The trip was a most interesting one, and well worth the moderate cost that this day's outing entailed.

There was on the "Rock" a very well-conducted Soldiers' Institute, the managing committee of which were far more broad-minded and liberal in their ideas than is usually the case with such people. Recognising the fact that other influences than those afforded by strictly religious functions were beneficial to the soldier, excursions into Spain and North Africa were by them frequently arranged. It was one of those latter that I now joined.

Starting by steamer from the Ragged Staff Wharf, at half-past six one summer morning, Tangier was reached shortly before nine o'clock. On landing at the little wooden jetty, under the walls of the battery, once manned by English soldiers, we set out to explore the town. Here we spent a most enjoyable day, and visited the many points of interest which are to be met with at almost every step. One of the first of these was the *Khasba*, or Moorish prison, with its dismal, evil-smelling dungeons. At the time these were all filled with a number of Arabs and Moors who had been unfortunate enough to incur the anger of a Vizier or other official. The prisoners here are always kept heavily fettered, but they are permitted to

A TRIP TO TANGIER

pass their time in making reed baskets and producing brass cups and trays, with a view to selling them to visitors. However, any money that is derived from this source seldom reaches them, as it is almost always seized by the cupidity of the gaoler. As a memento of the occasion I bought a beautifully inlaid sandal-wood box and a hammered-brass drinking-cup.

After leaving the *Khasba* we went on the *Socko* (market-place). Here the scene that presented itself was like one of those described in the "Arabian Nights." The picturesque crowd was composed of swarthy negroes from the Libyan desert, and stalwart Arabs accompanying the caravans which daily set out into the interior; tall and dignified Moors stalked from group to group, and slave-girls, waiting for their owners, with donkey-boys and native sweetmeat-sellers, made up a most interesting picture. A little apart from the crowd, sat a group of *talebs*, or letter-writers, each with his parchments and bundle of reed pens set out on a small table raised to a about eight inches above the ground. An appreciative throng of little black boys formed round a couple of snake-charmers, who, to the sound of the *rheetah*, or pipe, and tapping of the *tebel* (Arab drum—probably a form of the West Coast tom-tom), were making some hideous cobras go through their performances for our benefit. A group of camels loaded with valuable merchandise stood patiently together in one corner, waiting the pleasure of their masters. At every step there was something of interest, something novel to inspect. Still, the line must be drawn somewhere, and the ardent request, forwarded by one of the younger members of the party, to visit the Harem was very promptly vetoed by our guide.

All this involved the disbursement of a good deal of *backsheesh*. Spanish mendicants are fairly importunate, but they cannot hold a candle to the applicants for relief that the Englishman encounters here. At our approach the crowd of beggars sleeping in the sun at the door of every mosque would wake up and pursue us for half a mile down the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

street, shouting *backsheesh, backsheesh!* It was the same thing in the shops. Whether one bought anything or not from the curious little box-like stalls, where their proprietors sat cross-legged all day long, seemed to be a matter of profound indifference to them. The long-bearded, venerable-looking old Arabs and Moors were always ready to turn over their entire stock for the critical inspection of the "Infidel Frank." If he did any business with them, so much the better—if not, no matter. On a visitor's departure, however, they would plead earnestly to be given "something for coffee, sir."

About six o'clock in the evening we embarked again, and soon Tangier, with its narrow streets, its beggars, donkeys, and camels, with their Arab and Moorish proprietors in their quaint turbans and long flowing *haiks* and *bernous*, was left behind us, so also were its fortune-tellers and snake-charmers, its mosques and minarets, which were now fading away under the setting sun. Shortly before evening gun-fire we landed on the "Rock" again, and this most interesting expedition was over.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ON A TRANSPORT

Two years passed away, and the time of our stay on the "Rock" was fast drawing to a close. We had expected to leave for Egypt about Christmas time, and were already making preparations for the move. However, another destination was in store for us, and we were ordered to embark for Malta at the commencement of the following March.

Shortly before leaving Gibraltar another shuffling of the cards occasioned my promotion to the rank of Corporal. Although I still lived in the barrack-room with the men of my Company, my position, from a pecuniary point of view at any rate, was considerably improved. The pay now credited to me was 1s. 8d. per diem, but, as it was still subjected to the usual compulsory deductions for washing, messing, hair-cutting, and various regimental subscriptions, the amount actually received by me was only a trifle over £2 a month. The precise nature of these numerous deductions will be explained further on.

The passage to Malta was to be made in a hired transport, instead of in a troopship, as had previously been the case in our various moves. There is a considerable difference of opinion as to the merits of these two methods of conveying troops, and, having travelled some thousands of miles by each, I think that I have

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

gained some little knowledge of the particular advantages and disadvantages of each. While there is really but little to choose between them, I am inclined to prefer the hired transport, and this for these reasons.

The officers and crew on the troopships come from the Royal Navy, and take great care to impress this on the troops who happen to be travelling under their charge. So deeply imbued are they with a sense of the dignity and importance of their position that the unfortunate soldier on such occasions comes to regard himself as the most favoured of mortals in their condescending to take him at all. On the transports, the officers and crew being furnished by the owners, this sort of thing has no existence. Here, again, the troops are not required to perform quite so much swabbing of the decks, &c., as a great deal of this is done by the crew. In troopships, however, this is not the case at all, and the military contingent are continually engaged in swabbing decks, cleaning out lavatories and bath-rooms, and shifting ashes from the stove-hole, &c., throughout the day.

With regard to the important subject of food there is not much difference between that supplied on the troopship and that on the transport. The advantage, such as it is, lies with the latter, as there fresh meat and vegetables, and also bread, are more liberally issued. Ships' biscuits and tinned beef are, however, the staple commodities on each. A point in favour of the hired transport lies in the fact that here better ablutionary arrangements usually prevail.

In briefly summing up the advantages of the hired transport system, the following are those that stand out above the others: (1) Slightly improved commissariat; (2) comparative freedom from constant deck-swabbing, ash-shifting, and brasswork-polishing, &c.; (3) more space on deck for recreation; and (4) better sanitary arrangements. Also on a transport there is rather less watch-duty for the troops, as a portion of this is performed by the Lascar members of the crew. Their monotonously

ON A TRANSPORT

reiterated chant, "*Hum deckta hai!*" ("I am on watch") continually reminds one of this fact.

The P. and O. s.s. *Dunera* had been chartered to convey us to Malta. For this purpose she arrived at Gibraltar about the middle of March. Before leaving England the transport had been fitted up in practically the same manner as is a troopship. The compartments dividing the cabins had been removed, and the cargo decks fitted with the usual racks for kits and hammock-hooks. A sick bay and cells for prisoners had been provided in the forepart.

We embarked on a Tuesday morning, and a couple of hours after we were at sea, the familiar outline of the grand old "Rock" fading away in the distance. Owing to the presence on board of a strong draft of Artillery bound for Bombay, that the *Dunera* had brought out from England, we were very much cramped for room. The Gunners certainly took up more than their fair share of what accommodation existed, but, as we should only be on board for three days, it was considered more convenient to let matters remain as they were.

We kept very close to the African coast, and scarcely lost sight of it the whole time. On Friday morning land was seen right ahead. This was the coast of Gozo—which lies to the north of Malta—and is the second in importance in the group. Sailing up the coast line we obtained an excellent view of the villages dotting the hills. The Union Jack on the flag-staff on the tower of Fort Chambray proclaimed its British occupation.

In a couple of hours' time we had slipped down the coast, and the *Dunera*, with a pilot on board, was soon entering the Grand Harbour of Valetta. A splendid sight unrolled itself before us. Steaming slowly past a chain of magnificent forts, that of St. Elmo on the right (its grey walls and massive battlements once the scene of many an historic siege by both Turks and French), and those of Ricasoli and St. Angelo on the left, we dropped anchor in the famous harbour.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

The panorama revealed was a striking one. Round the edge of the great basin in which we lay rose the town of Valetta on the one side and that of Cottonera on the other. Adjoining the wharf to which we were moored stretched the Customs Houses, while batteries and forts frowned upon us from the heights above. In the creeks across the water were the dockyards, and behind them, rising in tiers from the harbour's edge to St. Margherita's Hill, were the streets of Cottonera. On the heights, on this side, lay the Verdala Barracks, the naval hospital at Bighi, and the Admiralty buildings. On the other side was Valetta, protected by Fort Lascari and the Capuchin battery. Beautiful as is Table Bay, and remarkable as is the first view of Gibraltar from the sea, neither of these places can be compared for impressiveness and picturesqueness combined to the spectacle presented on entering the narrow channel of the Grand Harbour of Valetta.

As soon as the propeller had stopped revolving a fleet of Maltese fruit-boats, or *dghaisas* (pronounced *dysas*), surrounded the ship's sides. They were loaded with tobacco and cigars of wonderful cheapness, and also with delicious figs and oranges. As very little money was in the men's possession the Maltese vendors readily adopted the primitive system of barter. "Changee for sea-cap, Johnny?" they would exclaim, holding up a handful of cigars and fruit. We soon fell in with their views on this point, and, handing over to them worsted sea-caps, received in exchange enough fruit and cigars to last us for the day. I suppose that this explains why so many Maltese walk about in soldier's caps?

The disembarkation was proceeded with at once, and at three o'clock the battalion had formed up in a long line on the narrow quay, waiting for the word from the Colonel. It soon came—"Battalion. 'Tchun! Shoulder ar-r-ms! Form fours! Left. By-the-right," shouted our Commanding-officer, and, headed by the band, we left the harbour and ascended the hill leading under Calcara Gate.

ON A TRANSPORT

As we did so every man, as we turned the corner, looked back for a parting glimpse of the *Dunera*. At the top of the hill we were met by the bands of the other battalions in the island, who had come to welcome our arrival. With these at our head we made our way down the crowded *Strada Reale* to the barracks of St. Elmo, our destination.

Twenty minutes' walk down this most interesting street, thronged with a motley crowd of Moors, Arabs, Turks, Greeks, and Barbary Jews from North Africa, in their native garments, with a predominating element of Italians and Maltese, brought us to the gateway of St. Elmo. Here we were destined to make our first acquaintance with soldiering in Malta.

CHAPTER XXIX

SOLDIERING IN MALTA

As in Gibraltar, guard-duty was very heavy in this station, and every four or five days I found myself on one or other of the many garrison-guards here. While Lance-corporals mount guard with a Sergeant, Corporals are generally entrusted with the sole charge of the smaller and less important ones. This was a more pleasant arrangement, and I always greatly preferred being, as happened in these cases, my own Commanding-officer. Still, the position had certain disadvantages, as on the shoulders of the Non-commissioned officer in charge of a guard devolved the entire responsibility for anything that went wrong during the tour of duty. The Commander of a garrison-guard in Malta had to keep all his wits about him, lest the vigilant eyes of the field-officer of the day or the Garrison Sergeant-major should observe anything which might be magnified into the offence of "neglect of duty when on guard."

The most important of the garrison-guards in Malta was the Main-guard, Valetta. This was a guard over the residence of the Governor, and was commanded by a Sub-altern. It was situated in the Strada Reale, immediately opposite to the entrance to the Palace. The outside of the guard-house was most imposing, and was adorned with a fine portico, supported by Ionic pillars. Inside, it was a very different case. The guard were accommodated

SOLDIERING IN MALTA

in a large and lofty vaulted chamber, divided up the centre by pillars into two narrow divisions. For the prisoners (a considerable number of whom were generally confined here every night) there was provided a room, which, owing to an inner row of bars extending from the floor to the ceiling in the centre thereof, was partitioned into two cages. The officer in command of the guard was provided with separate quarters upstairs.

On the last day of each month, when Valetta was full of soldiers from all parts of the island, the Main Guard would be by midnight crowded with prisoners. These would be detained there until escorts from their battalions should arrive the next morning to conduct them to their own barracks. Both the Sergeant of the Guard and the Garrison Military Police had always a lively evening on these occasions. I have, at times, been on this guard when only three or four prisoners would be handed over to me, and on dismounting have had as many as thirty passing through my hands. Some of the garrison-guards, however, were very quiet ones—especially those in detached positions. To get to certain of these involved a regular expedition, and even entailed a row across the Grand Harbour.

The St. Elmo Barracks were not at all comfortable ones in which to be quartered. The rooms were very large, and consequently it was difficult to keep them properly clean. In summer they were infested with a most unpleasant description of vermin, which nothing could apparently dislodge. Vast quantities of carbolic soap were served out by the Quarter-master, but its most diligent use seemed to have no effect on the pests.

In Malta, as in all stations abroad, the meat ration is increased to one pound daily. It always struck me as being rather a peculiar arrangement that in England, where the soldier's work is so much heavier as far as drills and manœuvres go, the recruits, who form the bulk of the battalions there, are given less food to stay their vigorous appetites than are their more seasoned comrades abroad.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

These, in the sweltering climates where they are stationed, certainly do not require so much animal food.

Every Monday in this garrison tinned meat was served out in lieu of fresh. This was not a popular diet with the troops, although, with the addition of some vegetables, it made a most excellent soup. The men, however, entertained a deep-rooted idea that it was mainly composed of the interior anatomy of certain defunct mules who had performed long and honourable service in the local transport corps. This, of course, was a libel, but none the less "bully" beef (probably a corruption of *bouilli*) was never greatly esteemed as an article of consumption. Frozen-meat stores have since this time been established in Valetta, and Australian meat preserved by this process is now largely issued to the garrison.

Nearly all the barracks in Malta were admirably situated for permitting almost unlimited indulgence in boating and bathing. At St. Elmo we were particularly fortunate in this respect. Two or three minutes' walk down a steep flight of steps would bring us to the edge of the Marsamuscetto Harbour, where a plunge into the clear limpid sea was most refreshing. Here, too, in the cool of the evening one could have a most enjoyable row. After the trying heat of the long summer day this was almost the only form of exercise that could be indulged in.

At the commencement of June, owing to the great prevalence of fever amongst the battalion, the St. Elmo Barracks were authoritatively declared to be too unhealthy for the occupation of troops. We were accordingly sent on detachment to the adjacent island of Gozo, while some highly necessary cleaning and disinfecting processes were applied to our late quarters.

Gozo lies at a distance of about forty miles to the north of Malta, and thither we were conveyed by a couple of Government tugs. On our arrival at our destination the greater part of the battalion was immediately placed under canvas, while two Companies were accommodated in barracks at Fort Chambray.

SOLDIERING IN MALTA

On my last promotion I had been transferred to "A" Company, and during the three months that I spent at Gozo I lived with them under canvas. The tents in which we were quartered were of what is known as the E. P. ("European Private") pattern, and were a great improvement on the old "Bell" style. Those that we now had were nearly square in shape, and allowed plenty of room for the half a dozen men allotted to each. For the sake of coolness the walls were made of a sort of thick twill, and the roof provided with a double lining. This pattern is largely used in India, and is admirably adapted for hot climates.

Life in Gozo was exceedingly slow; there was absolutely nothing to do all day long. The heat at this time of year was terrific, and at night sleep was almost impossible. After the early morning parade the interval until dinner-time would be absorbed in cleaning up the camp (with a view to its inspection by the Colonel) and putting kits in order, &c. In the afternoon, when the sun became a little less trying, cricket could be indulged in, but boating and bathing were not permitted until the cool of the evening. After eight o'clock every one had to be ashore again, and it was then difficult to occupy oneself for the remainder of the long evening. In September, to our great relief, we returned to Malta and took over barracks at Fort Manoel.

The building thus named is a large and well-fortified structure on the eastern side of the Marsamuscetto Harbour. It directly faces Valetta, but is almost entirely separated therefrom by this piece of water. Consequently, the troops quartered here have to row across the harbour in order to get into the town. It is possible to make the journey by road, but it is a very roundabout way of doing it, and is only resorted to when heavy baggage has to be moved.

In Fort Manoel the greater part of the battalion were placed in huts, as the accommodation in the barrack-rooms was extremely limited. These were also, as seems

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

to be usual in all the barracks in Malta, excessively ill adapted for housing troops. Living in the huts, too, was most unpleasant, on account of the vast swarms of flies—amounting to a regular plague—which almost filled the rooms. Food left exposed for a few minutes soon became covered with them and rendered quite unfit for consumption. In the winter months, mercifully, these pests mysteriously disappeared.

In the immediate vicinity of the fort is the town of Sliema. This is the third in importance of the “three cities”—each separated from the other by a stretch of water—Cottonera, Valetta, and Sliema. Like all of them, it is densely populated and famous for its number of churches, the bells of which keep up a ceaseless din, not only by day, but also by night. With regard to inhabitants, the island of Malta is one of the most thickly populated places in the world. In the town of Valetta alone the population actually exceeds 75,000 to the square mile, and is still increasing. Extraordinary as is this state of things, it is nothing to that which exists in the portion known as the “Manderaggio.” Here, on less than two-and-a-half acres of ground, actually live—I take the number from the last census—2574 people; this is in the proportion of 636,000 to the square mile, or 1017·6 to the acre.

The whole island is excessively priest-ridden, and the grossest superstition is deeply ingrained in the natures of the peasants. The abject fear and veneration with which they regard the grotesque wooden images, an oil lamp feebly glimmering above them, that are met with at every street corner, is really painful to witness. It is to be feared that there is a good deal of truth in the allegation that the local clergy are largely responsible for the strong feeling that exists between the lower class of natives and the English. This is bad policy, to say the least of it, as the prosperity of the island is entirely due to the presence of its large English garrison. If the French were in power there—for which state of affairs an ill-conditioned section

SOLDIERING IN MALTA

of the natives are ever clamouring—the Maltese would not find themselves treated with half the consideration that they meet with under our rule.

One of the first counsels issued to English troops on their arrival in the island is to avoid, at any cost, coming into contact with the natives. If they do they are almost certain to get the worst of it. They will be brought before a Maltese magistrate and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, no redress or appeal being possible. The proceedings are conducted in Italian and the unfortunate soldier will have no idea as to how his case is going. If a Maltese and an Englishman are brought up for the same offence—"assaulting a policeman" for instance—the native will almost invariably escape with an admonition or a nominal fine, while the soldier will, as likely as not, get six months' imprisonment. While the present state of the law exists, by which all civil offences are tried in the native courts, under Maltese statutes, the English Government can do nothing. They have, however, retained a barrister, who, whenever his professional services are required, attends to conduct the defence of soldiers. In Gibraltar an Englishman acts as stipendiary magistrate, and this is what ought to be the case in Malta.

On account of the large garrison there Malta is a fairly lively station. The Mediterranean Fleet have their headquarters at Valetta, and the blue-jackets fraternised very well with our troops. And this leads me to return to the subject of the pressing need of the provision of rational recreation for the leisure hours of the rank and file. Soldiers and sailors are not, as a rule, given to spending their evenings in the peaceful seclusion of "Soldiers' Homes," and, therefore, some counter-attraction to the dangers of the low-class public-houses with which Malta is so liberally provided was very much wanted.

To meet this necessity there was, during the last few months of our service there, established in Strada Mercanti, Valetta, a "Soldiers' Club." This was an

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

excellent institution, modelled apparently after the style of the Garrison Recreation-rooms in Gibraltar, and was a great boon to the troops serving here. A large house, built in the Maltese style, with an inner quadrangle, was fitted up for the requirements of the Club. A Canteen—for beer was not tabooed here, as is the case in "Soldiers' Institutes," &c.—a large concert hall (fitted with a stage at one end), billiard and reading-rooms, with others for suppers, baths, and beds, were included in the premises. For Sergeants separate arrangements were made, and Non-commissioned officers of this rank had a comfortably furnished room to themselves. Towards the maintenance of the institution grants from the Canteen funds of the battalion in the station were made monthly. The management of the Club was vested in a Committee formed among the officers and Non-commissioned officers of the garrisons and the place was conducted in a most satisfactory manner.

An institution of this sort should be a feature of every military station. They are greatly appreciated by the troops, and do far more good, in the way of keeping them from the attractions of the pot-houses—many of which are undisguised brothels—than do all the "Soldiers' Homes" in the kingdom. Their success is chiefly due to their recognising the fact that the soldier *will* drink beer. Wisely yielding the point, they then take steps to ensure his being provided, in moderation, with good liquor. He is then less likely to ruin himself with the poisonous abominations which are so readily sold in the grog-shops that he would otherwise frequent. Under the influence of the fiery "ambiet" of Malta, the "aquadiante" of Gibraltar, and the equally fatal "Cape Smoke" of South Africa, a man seems to get, for the time being, simply mad. Although there is a proportion of total abstainers in every regiment, the vast majority of soldiers are not. "Temperance statistics" are too obviously "cooked" to be seriously considered, and those who, pinning their faith to them, imagine that every man who signs the

SOLDIERING IN MALTA

pledge is a teetotaler, are the happily deceived victims of a delusion.

To the broad-minded manner in which this beer question is treated by them is due much of the popularity enjoyed by garrison clubs of this description. If "Soldiers' Homes" and similarly conducted places would only follow their lead in this matter, they would be far more liberally patronised. A man will naturally shun an institution where he is held up to public execration and openly prayed over as being on the direct road to perdition if he admits a preference for a cooling draught of "Bass" to a bottle of ginger-pop to quench his thirst after a field-day. Nor can he feel altogether at home in the moral atmosphere that pervades such places. Although, in some of them, certainly, more sensible ideas prevail, it is not the case in the majority.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SERGEANTS' MESS

At the commencement of the following year, by reason of the expiration of the service of a number of the senior N.C.O.s, I was advanced several places up the Corporals' roll and suddenly found myself among the first half a dozen. As I had taken care to qualify for promotion by passing the necessary professional examinations in drill and other military subjects, and also held a superior educational certificate to that in the possession of the majority of my brother N.C.O.s, I was selected for the step of Lance-sergeant.

This position is an *appointment*, not a *rank*; between the two there is a considerable difference. The term "Lance" means "acting," and the permanent grade of a Lance-sergeant is that of Corporal, as is private that of Lance-corporal. The four senior Lance-sergeants of a battalion receive fourpence per diem extra pay. As they perform all the duties of the higher rank, and are members of the Sergeants' Mess, and incur their share of the expenses thereby entailed, this addition to their income is a very necessary one. Although in reality a Corporal, a Lance-sergeant is to all practical intents and purposes a Sergeant, and performs all the duties of that rank. He assumes sole charge of guards and picquets and other duties, and is frequently required to command a company on parade, &c. For these reasons he wears, in common

THE SERGEANTS' MESS

with his seniors, a sash and three stripes ; these, however, are of worsted, instead of gold braid.

With the attainment of his third stripe, the Corporal bids a cheerful adieu to the Canteen and the men's recreation-room. He now finds his requirements in these respects ministered to with considerably more regard for decency and comfort than has hitherto been the case.

In virtue of my new status I immediately became a member of the Sergeants' Mess, and thereby had my surroundings considerably improved in many directions. These places, it is laid down, are provided as "one of the means of adding to the self-respect and comfort of the Non-commissioned and Warrant officers entitled to membership." And very ably does a well-conducted Mess fulfil this purpose.

This institution is to Warrant officers and Sergeants very much what the Officers' Mess is to the commissioned ranks. It is here that the Sergeants and Lance-sergeants have their meals and their recreation and the opportunity of withdrawing from the barrack-room. The Mess premises afford him a suitable place for meeting and entertaining his friends, and at all times give a Sergeant a welcome relief from the too-close contact with the rank and file. There is always a good mess-room, liberally supplied with newspapers and magazines, where he can enjoy comparative privacy. A billiard-room and bar, with, when possible, a separate room for meals, form a part of the establishment.

I found it—after over three years' abstinence from such luxuries—the greatest relief imaginable to sit down again at a table covered with a cloth, and to use a cup and saucer once more. The wooden forms, too, had given place to comfortable cushioned chairs. At meal-times we had the services of privates appointed to act as waiters. These men receive from the Mess funds a shilling per diem as extra-duty pay.

The food in a Sergeants' Mess is, of course, considerably superior to that in a barrack-room. As a rule, for their

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

messing each member contributes sevenpence a day ; in some of the higher-paid Corps the rate is rather more. For this we always had three good meals daily. The bread and meat are issued as a Government ration, but everything else is procured out of the extra-messing payment already mentioned.

For the up-keep of the Mess each single member subscribes 1s. 6d. monthly ; those who are married contribute half this amount. Three days' pay is also handed over to the Mess treasury by each member on first joining. The money thus obtained is applied to the purchase of the necessary crockery and furniture ; the payment of waiters and cooks ; the provision of newspapers and magazines, and to kindred purposes. The expenses of the Sergeants' cricket and football clubs, rifle meetings, dances, smoking concerts, and other similar entertainments are borne by a special fund, which varies in different regiments from another one to two shillings a month.

A word or two as to the management of these institutions. This is vested in the hands of a Committee, appointed quarterly, composed of a Colour-sergeant as President and two Sergeants as members. Another N.C.O., who must hold the rank of Colour-sergeant, is appointed Treasurer, and is an honorary member of the Committee of Management. Mess-meetings are held monthly, and are presided over by the Sergeant-major. The Adjutant, on behalf of the Commanding-officer, is also, I always understood, supposed to attend. This may be as it may, but on two occasions only did Lieutenant and Adjutant Marriott grace our meetings with his presence.

As a rule the business transacted on these occasions is purely formal. The Treasurer reads a statement of the account for the past month, and proposals for entertainments or the purchase of Mess property, &c., are introduced. If these are carried by the votes of two-thirds of those present they are sanctioned subject to the approval of the Commanding-officer.

THE SERGEANTS' MESS

An *ex-officio* member of the Committee is the Sergeant who acts as caterer. This position, although one which involves a great deal of hard work and a considerable amount of financial responsibility, is, nevertheless, one that is very much sought after. This, as is the case with the Canteen-steward, is on account of the many opportunities of making surreptitious profits supposed to be enjoyed by the occupant of the post. The commissions for orders and discounts on their bills allowed by the brewers and tradesmen who supply the Mess alone amount to a considerable sum. Any money thus obtained from these sources seems to be looked upon as the legitimate perquisite of the Sergeant officiating as caterer. It ought of course to be entered to the credit of the Mess funds, but, as the transactions of this nature are seldom in black and white, this is but seldom the case.

It is, however, not only by such comparatively unobjectionable methods as these that the caterer profits by his term of office. Unpleasant though it be to write it, it is, nevertheless, a fact that this individual has the opportunity of secretly securing for himself a very large amount of money. At a moderate estimate this sum may easily reach £15 per month, and is obtained by committing acts that are positively dishonest. The most common among these consist in watering the beer and giving short measure—during the rush of business after a field-day no one feels inclined to argue on this point—overcharging credit accounts, and surreptitiously selling liquor to unauthorised persons.

This is a particularly rich source of gain to the caterer who stoops sufficiently to take advantage of it. In every battalion there are a number of men who will run any risk and pay any price, provided that they can get a glass of beer or, preferably, spirits in the early morning. To such as these the back-door of a Sergeants' Mess and an accommodating caterer afford a ready method of obtaining what they want. No officious eyes are prying about at this hour, and the toper can thus indulge himself with but

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

little fear of detection. Of course he is charged about three times the ordinary price for any liquor procured in this manner, and thus the caterer is enabled to secure a handsome profit for himself. To make his stock-book balance correctly he has merely to enter the sale at a legitimate price to a member of the Mess.

In well-ordered Messes this sort of thing is but little known, and in properly managed ones never. Private soldiers coming to the caterer for such purposes would very effectually be sent about their business. Unfortunately all Messes are not carried on strictly in accordance with the regulations, and in some this sort of thing occurs to an extent that is but little dreamed of by the authorities. Whenever it happens, as it often does, that men are found in barracks as early as nine or ten o'clock in the morning to be under the influence of liquor, Commanding-officers and Adjutants are always greatly puzzled as to where they obtain the means from. They cannot drink in their barrack-rooms, under the eyes of the Non-commissioned officer, and the Canteen is closed until noon. The real solution of the apparent mystery is too often contained in the facts that I have mentioned.

Even officers are not always so ignorant of what goes on behind their backs as sometimes seems to be the case. Writing on this subject, the author of that valuable work, "Military Administration," from which I think I have already quoted, says: ". . . . the fact is to be very much regretted, but too often the cupidity of the caterer and the Non-commissioned officers connected with the management of the Sergeants' Mess soon gets the better of their self-respect. On all sides—in Corps of all arms—how is it that we so frequently hear of Sergeant this or that having made £50 or £100, or what not, in some incredibly short space of time when he 'had' the Sergeants' Mess? Such reports are far from being empty ones. They are facts, and are well known to be such by all the rank and file in the Corps where the cases have occurred. The thing is so frequently done that it has

THE SERGEANTS' MESS

ceased to excite any surprise, and no feeling that there is anything dishonourable in the performance appears to be attached to it. Yet there are no means by which such sums may be accumulated honestly and without infringing the Queen's Regulations."

These remarks were written some years ago, but the facts mentioned therein are much the same to-day as they were then. Beyond considering the sums referred to as being a good deal too high, I cannot, from what I know of the subject myself, take any great exception to the passage, an unpleasant commentary as it is on the honour of Sergeants' Mess Committees.

With reference to the mismanagement of such institutions, the same writer offers some valuable remarks on what is really the chief source of the dishonest caterer's private income. In commenting upon it, he hits the right nail very effectually upon the head in the following words :

"Frequently also civilians are admitted to Sergeants' Messes, nominally as guests, but really as customers for drink. The civilian is required to pay a higher price for liquor thus obtained than would be demanded from members of the Mess. These sales to civilians are most common at the hours when public-houses are closed on Sundays."

This is precisely what does occur, discreditable though it be to those concerned. On Sunday mornings (and evenings especially) a Sergeants' Mess where such practices are in vogue resembles nothing less than a tap-room. At these times the bar is crammed to its utmost capacity with outsiders, who by no stretch of imagination can be considered invited guests. They have walked into barracks (telling the Non-commissioned officer on gate-duty that they are going to visit Sergeant So-and-so) for the sole purpose of obtaining liquor, which the enforced closing of the public-houses prevents them procuring elsewhere. By laying down, and taking means to ensure its being carried out, a rule that no civilian should, under any circumstances,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

be permitted to pay for refreshment in a Mess, it would very soon be seen, by the sudden cessation of their visits, whether these were *bona fide* ones or not.

I am quite sure that it would be found almost impossible to enforce such a regulation. The outside patronage brings in a certain amount of profit to the Mess funds, and, on this account, it seems to be so welcome. The whole subject presents many difficulties. For instance, a Sergeant receives some civilities from a friend in town. Wishing to make some little return, what is more natural than that he should invite him to come up to the Mess and inquire for him on the following Sunday? In the Mess-room, hospitality, in the shape of liquid refreshment, is offered, and this the civilian, in turn, reciprocates.

Although the permitting of a stranger to a Mess to pay for refreshment is rather regrettable, it is, on the whole—opposed as it is to a proper club spirit—free from anything of an underhand nature. But this is not the case with the serving of liquor to those who are in no sense guests, whose object it is simply to obtain a drink. There are numbers of such, who, on Sunday evenings in particular, throng the Mess-room, which they appear to look upon as a species of public-house established for their convenience. Some of them have even the effrontery to claim admittance on the grounds that as taxpayers they have provided the Sergeants with their Messes. I have always thought that the Sergeants might very well reply that as soldiers they have provided these gentry with the means of remaining civilians.

All stock, liquor, and tobacco sold is supposed to be entered, at the time of sale, by the caterer, to the purchaser's name, in a book provided for that purpose. I say "supposed," because, in practice, it is impossible to carry this out. To jot down the particulars of every glass of beer sold during the rush after parades, &c., would take a dozen men all their time to do properly. How, then, is one man to do this, and, at the same time, to keep a watchful eye on the waiter who may be acting as his

THE SERGEANTS' MESS

assistant behind the counter at the same moment? Naturally, this cannot be done, and the regulation ought to be amended accordingly.

As the caterer is called upon to produce this "consumption-book" every morning for the Colonel's inspection, it naturally follows that a little hocus-pocus in connection with filling it up is practised by even the most lofty-minded caterer. As a rule, he affects a sublime disregard for the names of those to whom he enters the stock sold, and contents himself with merely making the sales effected correspond with the total amount of the various sums of money entered against each member's name; the items with the purchase of which they are credited are, consequently, purely imaginary. For instance, suppose he has taken £10 across the counter. On examining his stock he finds that he has sold 120 pints of beer, 60 glasses of spirits, six dozen minerals, 100 cigars, &c. He then enters, according to his own sweet will, to the names of Sergeants Jones, Browne, Robinson, Smith, Williams, and so on, a sufficient amount of each item to correspond with the cash in the till and the depletion of stock, which will thus balance his consumption-book with his stock-book.

The results of this quaint system of book-keeping are sometimes rather funny. "Bless my soul!" exclaims the Colonel, as he turns over the pages, "how the deuce did Sergeant Smith drink ten whiskies and sodas yesterday and not get drunk? Why, I couldn't do it myself! I thought the fellow was a teetotaler!" And the unfortunate Smith stands a chance of having his reputation for sobriety blasted. According to the same authority, it would appear that Sergeant Jones, after a week's indulgence in gin and bitters, evinces, for the following fortnight, a reckless partiality for lime-juice and lemonade. Teetotalers are shown to be sailing under false colours, and reputed non-smokers to buy cigars by the dozen.

No great amount of harm is done by this course, which it is more or less incumbent upon the caterer to perform.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

The "consumption-book" might very well be abolished; the keeping of it up is very much resented by all concerned. It always seemed to me to be nothing but a grandmotherly contrivance for ascertaining how a Sergeant spent his money. And this object, as I have shown, is utterly defeated. Nor is it really necessary for the purpose of showing how much business is done, as this is very much more satisfactorily effected by the entries in the daily stock-sheets. I know that it is contended that the one serves as a check on the other; but this is not really the case, except in very small Messes, where the amount of trade that takes place is of a very trifling nature. Where much is done, the entries in the consumption-book are "cooked," as I have described, to balance the totals in the stock-book.

A Commanding-officer who seeks to flatter himself that no irregularities take place in the Sergeants' Mess under his charge is easily hoodwinked. He does his best, of course, to ensure the regulation being complied with, but, as in the nature of things he cannot get behind the scenes, a great deal goes on of which, most fortunately for his peace of mind, he remains in blissful ignorance.

CHAPTER XXXI

PEMBROKE CAMP

THE first responsible duty that I was required to perform as Sergeant was that of commanding the Barrack, or Quarter, Guard at Fort Manoel. Although chiefly intended for the protection of the main entrance-gate there, this guard was also charged with the safe custody of the whole barracks. In an earlier chapter the routine of such duty has already been described ; something may therefore now be said with regard to the manner in which the Sergeant or other N.C.O. in charge is affected thereby.

After he has told off his men into reliefs and posted the necessary sentries, he "takes over" the Guard-room, lock, stock, and barrel, from the old Sergeant. From this N.C.O. he receives an inventory of the various utensils and articles of furniture under his charge. When he has carefully compared this with what is actually handed over (duly noting any discrepancies), he signs the certificate appended, thereby accepting all responsibility in connection with them until he himself is relieved. The Old Guard then marches away, amidst a flourish of bugles and presenting of arms, and the New Guard takes over the duties for the next four-and-twenty hours.

One of the first details to which attention has now to be given lies in the making out of the "Guard-report." This document consists of a double sheet of foolscap, in which the Commander is required to enter various par-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

ticulars concerning his Guard. At the top is printed a certificate to the effect that "the prisoners were taken over, and found washed and shaved; the articles in charge of the Guard were in good condition, and corresponded with those noted in the inventory; that all reliefs were properly inspected; that the sentries were visited twice by day and twice by night, and found alert on their posts and properly acquainted with their orders; and that the prisoners were visited every two hours," &c. To this is appended in manuscript a further certificate, which varies according to the orders of the garrison. It generally states that the "Guard-room was properly cleaned before dismounting; the filter kept full of water; the barrack lights extinguished at the proper hours; and that the different gates under charge of the Guard were locked and unlocked at the hours mentioned," and so on. Then follows the "Time and Post Roll." In the proper columns of this are entered the names of the N.C.O.s and men composing the Guard, and their posts, with the hours during which they are on sentry. By this plan it can always be very easily ascertained who was on sentry on any particular post when anything has gone wrong.

The inner sheet is occupied with a report of all prisoners who have been confined in the Guard-room during any portion of the time in which the present Guard has been on duty. In separate columns are entered their names, the dates and places of offences and confinement, the nature of the charges, and the names of the witnesses. The punishment awarded is subsequently inserted by the officer disposing of the case.

A list of articles in the charge of the Guard, extending from tables, forms, trestles, order-boards, handcuffs, lanterns, and locks and keys, down to the poker and shovel, are minutely particularised on the back of this sheet. Any damage done to any of the valuables is carefully noted against the delinquent's name. Should he fail to satisfactorily trace a broken article to the proper man the Commander of the Guard has to make it good himself.

PEMBROKE CAMP

However, "fair wear," and "damaged by the storm," always came in very handy as a means of explaining most of these disasters. A certain amount of give and take is necessary amongst Commanders of Guards, and it does not do to be too particular in these matters. Nevertheless, I once, at the North Flat Bastion, Gibraltar, had a considerable argument with a Corporal whom I there relieved, as to whether a missing gate-key could be satisfactorily accounted for or not by entering it as "damaged by big-gun practice." This was all very well as far as broken windows went, but I scarcely felt inclined to accept it in this particular case.

Comparatively speaking, the Sergeant of the Guard has not much to do during the day ; towards evening, however, he gets fairly busy. On the night of a pay-day, in particular, he is almost certain to be required to receive into custody a number of prisoners. The majority of these will be brought in from the Canteen, while the military police and picquets in town will also furnish their quota.

There is very little ceremony observed when drunken men are brought in to be confined. "Stand by, the Guard !" shouts the sentry outside, on the approach of the escort, and the Guard "stand by" accordingly. "Here's a candidate for you, Sergeant," remarks the Corporal cheerfully, as the door opens and a kicking, struggling, wildly blaspheming reprobate, who has been sampling strong liquor too freely, is brought in, or frog-marched thereto, as the case may be, by an escort.

Meanwhile the Guard are not backward in making preparations for his reception. A form is run out into the centre of the room, and on this he is placed before he quite knows where he is ; two of the Guard seize him by the arms, two others by the legs, and in less time than it takes to write it, his boots are stripped off him, his pockets searched and emptied, and he is bundled neck and crop into a cell, to cool his heels until morning.

At first he hammers loudly at the door, but as he has no boots on, and the iron-studded panels hurt his hands,

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

he soon desists. A deaf ear is turned to his shouts and ravings, and his demands to see the Orderly-officer, the Colonel, and the General commanding the Brigade are met with the bland assurances that "he will certainly see all the officers that he wants to at the Orderly-room when he is brought up there." His importunate howls for blankets and pillows, together with his imperative demands for the life-blood of the Sergeant of the Guard when he realises that he will have to do without any bedding, do not avail him much. Rather the reverse, for most N.C.O.s acted as I always did in these cases, and most religiously put against such offenders an additional charge of "creating a disturbance in the Guard-room."

On the last day of each month—more commonly known as "settling-up day"—when all the eight Companies of a battalion draw their pay together, the scenes that sometimes take place in a Guard-room are excessively lively. In Malta the Sergeants of the Main Guard always took handcuffs with them, and I have sometimes been compelled to manacle particularly obstreperous men, in addition to strapping them down to the guard-beds, to prevent them murdering each other.

The Sergeant of a barrack guard has no chance whatever of obtaining any sleep. If it were not for the mere attending to the confinement of prisoners, and constantly visiting them to ascertain their condition, the return of men off pass, at all hours of the night, would effectually prevent it. Every five or ten minutes after 10 P.M. the cry of "Gate! gate!" compels him to go outside and give admittance to some belated pleasure-seeker. All N.C.O.s and men returning to barracks after tattoo have to report themselves at the Guard-room, where the time of their arrival is entered by the Sergeant on the Company pass-lists with which he has been furnished. Those who come in drunk, or improperly dressed, or absent for a certain period, are promptly confined by him. Twice during the night the Commander of the Guard has to take a patrol round the sentries and ascertain that they are

PEMBROKE CAMP

doing their duty properly. He has also to inspect every relief on its being posted, and to turn out the Guard when visited by the Orderly-officer. Altogether, his chances of getting an hour or two's sleep during his tour of duty are exceedingly remote, as until about three o'clock in the morning he seldom manages to secure thirty consecutive minutes to himself. When one is having only four or five nights in bed at a time Guard duty takes a good deal out of one.

In the morning there is a lot of cleaning up to be done, as the tables and forms have to be thoroughly scrubbed and the floor swept, &c., before the dismounting. Just before "office-hour" a regular gaol delivery takes place, as all the prisoners with the exception of those confined for drunkenness (who have to remain in custody for two days before being disposed of) are marched up to the Orderly-room for punishment.

Since Captains of Companies are empowered to treat simple breaches of discipline, only the more serious offences are brought before the Colonel. Those who are awarded imprisonment by the Commanding-officer (who alone is empowered to inflict this punishment) are brought back to the Guard-room, to await their removal to the cells.

Another duty in which I was now eligible for participation was that of Company Orderly-sergeant. This was undertaken in turn by the Sergeants and senior Corporals of each Company. The tour of such duty extended for a week at a time, and its performance fully occupied one for the whole of each day, from *réveille* to "Lights out."

Immediately after the sounding of *réveille* the Orderly-sergeant has to hurry round the barrack-rooms of his Company and ascertain if there are any absentees. Twenty minutes later he parades the men required for fatigue-duties, &c. He attends all parades, and calls the roll on them. At breakfast and dinner he reports to the Orderly-officer if his Company is present, or otherwise.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

During his term of office he has charge of the Company duty-roster, and daily makes out from the numbers furnished him by the Sergeant-major the list of those required for the next day's guards, picquets, fatigues, &c. Every evening he copies into a book provided for the purpose the "orders of the day," as issued by the Commanding-officer.

In all Corps and Battalions in every branch and department of the Service these are promulgated daily. In much the same manner as a Captain in the Navy keeps a log for his ship, the Adjutant of a battalion writes out for the information of all concerned the orders and announcements for the following day. These entries are chiefly devoted to the publication of promotion and reductions, awards and punishments, proceedings of courts-martial, instructions for parade, &c. In course of time the accumulated issues of these "orders" form more or less comprehensive diaries, and if carefully kept up prove of great value to the military chronicler. Another of the Orderly-sergeant's clerical duties is to prepare for the Captain's signature the daily parade-state, showing the distribution of his Company. On this return men in hospital and prison, and those employed as signallers, clerks, tailors, servants, &c., have all to be entered separately. At 9.30 P.M., accompanied by the Orderly-corporal, he warns the necessary men for the next day's duties, and calls the roll in each barrack-room. The names of the men "on pass," and of those who are absentees, have to be reported by him to the Sergeant of the Guard, and the state of his Company, explaining whether present or otherwise, to the Orderly-officer on tattoo parade. A quarter of an hour later he certifies to him that the lights in his Company's barrack-rooms are extinguished, and is then at liberty to seek his own couch.

This is only the barest outline of his duties; at any hour of the day the bugler is liable to be ordered to sound for "Orderly-sergeants," and he has thereupon to run down to

PEMBROKE CAMP

find out what is wanted. Small parties of fatigue-men are required all day long, and these he has to furnish as quickly as possible. There is a good deal of responsibility in connection with his work, and he is entirely confined to barracks until it is completed.

In the autumn of this year my Company, with two others, proceeded to Pembroke Camp, to go through the musketry course which our move to Gozo had postponed. It was rather a good time of year for firing, and the three weeks that we spent on detachment there were much appreciated by the men. The relief from garrison duty, too, was a welcome one.

Pembroke Camp, where the ranges were, lies on the coast, at a distance of about four miles from Sliema. The musketry camp is situated on the top of a hill sloping down to the sea-shore, on the edge of which are embankments containing targets. From the summit of the hill crowned by two fine forts is a magnificent view of Valetta.

There were several other Companies belonging to the different battalions in the garrison going through musketry at the same time. No quarters being available we were all placed under canvas on the sandy plateau at the top of the hill. It was not a very comfortable arrangement, as we had no beds, and the bare boards covered with but three blankets per man were not conducive to sound repose. On the first night of our arrival we all, acting on a hint from the more experienced troops, scoured the hill-side for grass, weeds, and leaves, with which to stuff one of the blankets. These, after being roughly stitched up, afforded a sort of substitute for a mattress, and seemed in some slight degree to ameliorate the discomfort of our severely springless beds.

We were seldom on the range for more than three or four hours each day, as the use of the targets had to be shared among a large number of troops. At night, time hung very heavily and the long evenings were most monotonous. There were seldom any lights in the tents, as the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

use of candles was not allowed, and the supply of lamp oil that was issued was so limited that, for quite three nights in the week, we were in complete darkness after sunset. As a Lance-sergeant, however, I could make use of the mess at the adjacent Pembroke Barracks, where a battalion was permanently stationed.

Whilst going through the course here I officiated on one or two occasions as a butt-marker. Men employed on this duty have to signal to the firing-point the value of each shot as it strikes the target. For this purpose they are placed in an iron mantlet, a few yards distant from, and almost facing, the target. As each hit is made the marker indicates its position by raising a disc to a similar spot on a dummy target immediately above him. Although there is no real risk about it provided one keeps well within the shelter, it is, nevertheless, rather disconcerting to the novice to find bullets whistling round him at such very close quarters. It is rather exciting, too, to be in the mantlets when recruits are firing, as their marksmanship is apt to be somewhat erratic, and numbers of bullets strike the iron plates forming the back of the shelter instead of the bull's-eye on the target in front. As for those shots that strike neither the target nor the mantlet, and do not fall into the earth half-way up the range, they bury themselves harmlessly in the high bank in which the targets are fixed. This happens to so large a proportion of them, in time, that this bank becomes a veritable lead mine. Any shots which are so peculiarly aimed as to miss even this generous mark pursue their wild flight across the sea until their course is checked by a descent into the depths beneath.

A butt-marker requires very keen eyesight, as he has to watch the target before him for the impact of each bullet. Since the targets are closely scrutinised at the conclusion of each practice, he must observe each shot both quickly and surely. The number of hits found on each portion thereof (bull's-eyes, centres, and outers) are then carefully compared with the numbers already signalled by him to the

PEMBROKE CAMP

firing-point. In order to better ensure accuracy if there is any appreciable delay between the firing of a shot and the indication of its value, a peremptory message to "wake up, and not to go to sleep" is sent down to the N.C.O. in charge of the mantlet in question. Hence, speed, as well as correctness, has to be achieved.

It is wonderful to note the proficiency which butt-markers acquire with a little practice. Some of them can tell, by ear alone, whether the bull's-eye or the centre plate of the target is hit. I had often heard this said, but I always put it down as an exaggeration until I received an ocular demonstration of its truth. The novice may watch the target as closely as he likes: he will hear the sharp "ping" of a bullet, and see perhaps a splinter fly in the air, but to tell which portion of the target has been struck will be quite beyond him. After a hundred rounds have been fired and the target is thickly covered with hits, the correct and rapid signalling of the shots takes even the most experienced man all his time to do satisfactorily.

At the end of the month the course was brought to an end, and after striking the Camp we returned by march-route to our old quarters, and took up again the round of garrison and regimental duty.

CHAPTER XXXII

MUSTA MANŒUVRES

A GREAT feature of soldiering in Malta was made of the annual manœuvres, which were held in the early spring. The first of these that the Fusiliers attended took place in the vicinity of Fort Musta, about seven miles from Valetta. As the period of their duration was limited to six days, a good deal of work had necessarily to be concentrated into them. For a battalion coming from a place like Gibraltar, where it is quite impossible to properly exercise the troops, such manœuvres are of great use. They are not, however, to be compared to those that are held in England every autumn.

Those in Malta were modelled very much upon the programme of an Indian Camp of Exercise. The locality selected adjoined the village of Musta, named after a fort—or perhaps the fort was named after the village—in its vicinity. There were several of these erected on the slopes of the different hills for the protection of the island in the event of a hostile landing being effected on the coast line.

Owing to the excessively limited amount of ground available in which to pitch a camp the tents were unusually crowded and placed very close to each other. In order to economise space the old bell-pattern ones were here made use of, and sixteen men were allotted to each. At night we lay on waterproof sheets, with a couple of blankets per man for bedding.

MUSTA MANŒUVRES

The work of each day consisted generally in executing long marches to repel imaginary attempts at landing on various parts of the coast. Sometimes one battalion would be opposed to another and the attack and defence of a position carried out. As at this time of the year it was excessively hot, these different operations were rather trying. The rations, too (consisting chiefly of dry biscuit and tinned meat), upon which they were made, served to excite a raging thirst. Consequently, on the return to Camp, every one rushed to the Canteen, where another series of manœuvres was gone through to obtain beer. Although the Sergeants had while in Camp to mess in the same tents with the men, a separate marquee was established for them, where liquor could be procured.

A concluding episode of the operations was furnished by an attack on the Camp by a column composed of the two local regiments permanently quartered in Valetta. These were the Royal Malta Fencibles and the Royal Malta Militia. Both these Corps were almost exclusively officered and manned by Maltese. The Fencibles are Regulars, and are equipped as Garrison Artillery, while the Militia are much the same as a Volunteer battalion in England, as they drill all the year round. They wear the same uniform and are armed in the same manner as is an English Infantry regiment. In the Militia there is a fair sprinkling of English Non-commissioned officers, and the Adjutant is also a Regular officer.

Having successfully defeated the hostile designs of this force upon us, preparations for the return of the troops to barracks were commenced. As I happened to be detailed to accompany the baggage-guard, I did not get back to Fort Manoel until evening. The comparative civilisation of barrack life, with its attendant comforts of beds and regular meals again, was very welcome.

As we had now been quartered for some twelve months in the island we had by this time quite settled down to our surroundings. Comparisons between this place and those in which we had previously been stationed instinc-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

tively presented themselves. Despite its many drawbacks, the balance was, on the whole, in favour of Malta. For one thing, there was room to move about in here, and the close confinement to which battalions on the "Rock" are subjected did not make itself felt to quite the same effect. Then there was infinitely more life in Malta than there was in Gibraltar. From the fact of the Mediterranean Fleet having its headquarters here, there was always something going on in the way of cricket and football matches, smoking-concerts, or theatricals, &c. The different barracks, however, were very bad ones indeed. They were all in a most dilapidated condition, and were extremely uncomfortable and overcrowded. For this last reason they were also excessively unsanitary. Particularly was this the case during the long hot summers. At such times of year (May to October) the hospitals would be filled to their utmost with men suffering from different forms of fever.

In Malta the heat seemed far more trying than had even been the case in Cape Town. From its geological formation, it seems in some peculiar manner to retain the heat of the day and to give it out again at night. On account of the parched nature of the soil the whole land is practically little less than an arid rock, on which scarcely a tree or a blade of grass is to be found. What little cultivation does exist there is the result of excessive labour on the part of the inhabitants. Before even a potato can be produced the bare rock has to be dug into and the excavation carefully filled with artificial and imported soil. Another fact that militates against agriculture of the most limited nature is that the country is so hilly that very few really level portions are to be anywhere met with. The "fields," in which maize and wheat are chiefly grown, are divided from one another by low stone walls, for hedges are absolutely unknown in Malta.

In the whole of the island there is neither stream nor river, and consequently irrigation has to be resorted to for the little amount of cultivation that is carried out. Water

MUSTA MANŒUVRES

for the garrison and civil population is obtained from large tanks, and is conveyed by a fine aqueduct into Valetta. Notwithstanding these great natural drawbacks a fair quantity of cotton is here grown. Oranges and lemons, vines and prickly pears—which latter seem to spring out of the very rock itself—flourish abundantly in the most sandy descriptions of soil. The orange groves at San Antonio, where the Governor has his summer residence, are one of the sights of the island. On some of the older estates there are some really beautiful gardens, which, with their stately trees and finely-turfed lawns and bright flower-beds, remind one of England again; but these are the result of infinite labour and many years of unremitting care.

Cows are scarcely known in Malta, for there is absolutely no pasture land in any portion of it. Milk is obtained from the large number of goats, which roam everywhere and apparently flourish on a diet of dry sticks and stones. In the minds of the natives the goat seems to take the place of the domestic pig in Ireland. At night they sleep with their masters, and are quite considered as members of the family. Every evening at sunset the air is aroused by a din of tinkling bells, as the peasants muster their herds and lead them to their homes.

I could never manage to learn anything of the Maltese language—beyond the few colloquialisms that soldiers always pick up so readily. Indeed, soldiers invariably display a most remarkable ability in acquiring sufficient of the vernacular in which to swear vigorously before they have been a week in any new quarters.

In Malta, Italian is the language of the higher classes, and is that which is spoken in the chief shops. It is, however, totally unlike the dialect of the peasants. On account of the extremely mixed population of the island—Englishmen, Italians, French, Americans, Turks, Greeks, Arabs, Moors, &c., composing it—a *patois* blending these various tongues has been gradually adopted, and

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

now possesses the dignity of being a recognised language. It is far more akin to the Arabic of North Africa than anything else, and it is said that natives from Egypt and the Barbary States can always make themselves understood by the Maltese peasants. The language, whatever else it may be, is certainly not melodious to the ear, and a paragraph printed in Maltese looks almost as unpronounceable as a page of Welsh does to the average Englishman.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN A MILITARY HOSPITAL

FROM the situation, on the edge of the different wharfs of most of the barracks in Malta, fever was very rife among the troops. All the drainage of the three cities is indiscriminately shot into the Grand Harbour, which thus becomes little better than a gigantic cess-pool. There is very little tide in these waters, and the natural result of this state of things is the abnormal prevalence of disease in the station. The habits of the lower classes of the natives are not cleanly ones, and their ideas on the subject of sanitary science are of the most primitive description. Any system of drainage, for instance, seems to be quite unknown to them, and they have a quaint practice of depositing all refuse matter in heaps on the ground outside their doors. During the summer months the fierce sun beating down on these for hours at a time converts them into a fertile source of disease. The commonest of these is "Mediterranean" fever—a form of enteric—which attacks English troops to an alarming extent. The number of men annually invalidated from the station on account of this cause, and the mortality that so often ensues before they can be sent away, furnishes ample evidence of the unhealthiness of the island. Even if a man be lucky enough to recover from an attack, his health is practically broken and his constitution completely undermined.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

The symptoms of the disease seem to be of a particularly wasting nature, with periodical attacks of excruciating pain in every limb. Even when discharged from hospital, it is a common sight here to see men walking about barracks almost doubled up with "fever pains." At times the hospital wards become so crowded that patients have to be sent away as soon as the necessity for keeping them on a special diet is removed.

Military hospitals, while possessing many features in common with those established for civilians, yet differ materially therefrom in more than one particular. A conspicuous feature of the former class is that they are general ones, and consequently ones where all diseases are treated. Separate establishments for distinct maladies are not a part of the military system. Of course, infectious cases and others which from their nature render isolation imperative are accommodated in wards specially set apart for the purpose.

A point with which a visitor to a military hospital is especially impressed lies in the quietness and absence of all the noise and bustle usually so inseparable from anything military therein observed. For obvious reasons, *réveille* in hospital is not accompanied by the blowing of bugles and beating of drums, which so effectually mark the ceremony in camp or barracks. Such procedure would, of course, be decidedly detrimental to the recovery of any serious cases, for though music may have charms, bugles most certainly have not. In place of this the wards are visited at the duly appointed time by an Orderly of the Medical Staff Corps, who personally directs the patients therein to "rise and shine." The hour at which this ceremony takes place varies according to the station and the time of year. As a rule it is at 6.30 A.M. in summer and half an hour later in winter. All who are considered convalescent have then to make up their beds and dress themselves for the day.

The clothing worn by soldiers in hospital is not unduly ornate in design. It consists of a jacket and trousers of

IN A MILITARY HOSPITAL

rough serge, sky-blue in colour, a flannel under-shirt (over which is worn one of white linen), and a red cotton neck-tie. Instead of boots, yellow slippers are worn. The effect of this costume is certainly a little startling. In order to mark the Corps or branch of the Service to which he belongs every man wears his regimental forage-cap.

At eight o'clock the Orderly-men of each ward (a duty undertaken in turn by the "convalescents") proceed to the cook-house and fetch up the morning meal. Roughly speaking the diets in hospital are three—(1) Milk; (2) convalescent, and (3) varied. All patients on their admission—whether they be suffering from a broken leg or merely toothache is immaterial—are placed for a day or two, if not longer, on the first-named diet. This consists only of twelve ounces of bread, with three pints of milk (with a little rice in one of them), per diem. It is not particularly sustaining, and after being kept on it for two or three weeks, as is sometimes the case, a man feels half starved.

When a patient has received permission to get up and dress for the day, or a part of it, he is generally promoted to "convalescent" diet. He now receives daily 16 oz. of bread, 1 oz. of butter, and 8 oz. of meat and potatoes. As the meat which he gets at dinner has previously done duty in the preparation of the beef-tea supplied to the specially-dieted men, it is naturally somewhat devoid of its full nutritive value. After some time on this fare a man may be further advanced to the "varied" stage, apparently with the idea of feeding him up and getting him, as far as possible, into condition before his discharge. His daily rations are then increased to 18 oz. of bread, 1 oz. of butter, and $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. of meat, with potatoes. A chop is occasionally substituted for the meat, which is either roasted or boiled. In order to ensure that each man gets his proper allowance, the dinners are separately served up, in small tin dishes. "Special diets," on the order of the medical officer in charge of the case, are, when con-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

sidered necessary, issued in lieu of the foregoing. These "extras" generally take the shape of fish, chicken, milk puddings, eggs, fruit, &c. Wine, stout, lemonade, and barley-water are also given when ordered. With the exception of those on "milk" and "special" diets, all patients receive, in addition, a pint of tea at breakfast and tea time.

Whatever a man's diet may be—champagne and chicken, or milk and rice—he is mulcted in precisely the same rate—viz., sevenpence per diem—during his stay in hospital.* This certainly seems to be somewhat of an anomaly. On a married soldier the charge presses very heavily. A few days in hospital makes a serious hole in his pay; and his wife, who has to buy food for herself and children during his absence, has rather a bad time of it.

"Free Medical Attendance" seems to be somewhat peculiarly interpreted when the sum of sevenpence is deducted from a man's pay for each day that he is under medical treatment in hospital. The only "Medical Attendance" in the Army that is really "free" is a generous dose of medicine—or, perhaps, a couple of pills—that is given unstintedly when the circumstances of the case are not considered to require detention in hospital.

For treatment of injuries received on duty no charge whatever is supposed to be made; but to carry this theory out generally involves a good deal of trouble, and the point as to whether a man's hospital expenses are to be debited to him or not has to be settled by a Court of Inquiry. I remember a case that occurred at Gibraltar of a sentry being blown off a magazine during a storm and breaking both his legs. With great difficulty and the unwinding of a vast amount of red tape he eventually succeeded in getting *half* his hospital-stoppages remitted.

When breakfast is finished the men set to work to tidy up the wards and prepare for the impending visit of the

* By the terms of a new order, issued a few months ago, hospital stoppages are now no longer enforced.

IN A MILITARY HOSPITAL

doctors, who commence their rounds about 9.30 A.M. The wards are kept beautifully clean—far more so than is a barrack-room. On account of the men always walking about in slippers, the floors are easily kept white and free from the defacing marks of muddy boots. The copper coal-scuttles, tin brackets, and dishes are brilliantly polished, the fire-places blackleaded, and the hearths carefully swept.

Just before the doctors are due the nursing-sisters, under whose care are the patients of certain wards, look in to see that everything is in readiness for their visit. The employment of these ladies, the origination of which by Miss Florence Nightingale is a matter of history, is a feature of all the large military hospitals at home and abroad. They receive their training, either in civilian institutions or at Netley, and, although many arguments have from time to time been advanced against their employment, it has always been eventually decided that their detention is in the interests of the service eminently desirable. Women at sick beds are in their element; and the most confirmed misogynist must fain acknowledge that to the tenderness and solicitude of these ladies is often due the restoration to health of many a hopeless patient and the soothing of many an otherwise lonely death-bed. To them are often confided the last thoughts of many a poor fellow, who, far away on a foreign shore, and separated from his home and loved ones, dies for his country as surely as if he had fallen on the field of action.

Their work is done quietly and unostentatiously, but is none the less valuable on this account—rather the reverse is really the case. Many of the nurses have been decorated for service in the field; and no expedition ever starts without a number of them forming a portion of the medical complement. The importance of this work has been recognised over and over again by the General officers under whom they have served. On them devolve chiefly the duties of administering medicines, taking temperatures, adjusting bandages and dressings, and seeing that the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

doctors' orders, as regards diet and treatment, are properly carried out.

To each of the medical officers attached to the hospital is assigned the care of certain wards. These they visit in turn, accompanied on their rounds by Orderlies of the Medical Staff Corps. The patients are examined, and the necessary diets and medicines prescribed, and the discharge of those considered cured is ordered. New comers, on their admission, are now seen, and operations, if necessary, performed.

Concerning the customary morning visit round the wards of a medico with a *penchant* for long words there is extant rather a good story. He was accompanied, on the tour by a General who was at the time making his annual inspection. This officer was of an inquiring disposition, and demanded at every bed the particulars of the disease of its occupant. These were given him by the doctor in the most verbosely medical terms. Presently he was asked what was the matter with a certain consumptive patient.

"Phthisis, sir," he was told.

"Phthisis?—I never heard of it. What is it?"

"Commonly called consumption, sir," was the reply.

"Why the deuce don't you speak English then, without any of your dashed medical tomfoolery about it? Phthisis indeed!" snorted the General testily.

Shortly after he inquired in another ward—"What's the matter here? In English this time."

"Booze," was the unexpected response.

The various processes incidental to the occupation of a hospital bed by a soldier are briefly as follows:—The first thing that he does on rising in the morning, is to report himself to his Company Orderly-corporal as "going sick." His name, age, length of service, religious beliefs, and other equally interesting particulars are then entered by this N.C.O. on the Company "Sick Report." About 8.30 A.M. the bugle sounds the inspiring notes of the "Sick Call," and, in obedience to its summons, all who

IN A MILITARY HOSPITAL

fancy that they require medical advice (the "sick, lame, and lazy," as they are generally charitably designated) parade at the inspection-room.

The medical officer on duty usually makes short work of them; indeed, from constant practice, he is a past-master at rapid diagnosis. Elaborate explanations of the distressing symptoms from which his would-be patients declare themselves to be suffering are quite thrown away upon him. "Not much the matter with you, my man," he remarks to the recruit who has ingenuously explained that as far as eating and sleeping go he is all right, "but parades make him feel giddy." He marks his sick report *M.D.* ("medicine and duty"), which, being interpreted, shows that he is to receive a dose of medicine, but is not to be excused any duty or parade. This is the fate of a number of those who, owing to their too great libations of the previous night, awake with "big heads" and an invincible antipathy to a route-march or long field-day. These the military medico knows very well, and the sort of treatment that best suits their complaint. The graver cases require more consideration. For them he therefore orders so many days "light," or "excused" duty, involving temporary relief from parades, &c., or, in extreme cases, admission to hospital.

When this is the case the man reports himself to the N.C.O. who is detailed to accompany the sick. Before starting he draws his day's rations of bread and meat. He also takes with him his kit, but not his accoutrements. On arrival at the hospital, to which he is driven in an ambulance—represented in the Service by a heavy and cumbersome waggon of primitive construction, and totally devoid of springs—he goes before the senior medical officer, who makes a second diagnosis. On the result of this examination he bases his decision as to whether the case is one requiring hospital treatment or not. Should he be of opinion that it is, he endorses the sick report accordingly, and the patient is allotted to a ward.

The first thing that he now does is to give his rations

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

to the hospital cook and his kit to the keeper of the stores. When this has been done he is served out with a set of bedding, a suit of clothes, slippers, linen, and crockery for use while an inmate of the establishment.

On arrival in his ward he is shown to a vacant bed and ordered to "get into it as soon as possible." This he is willing enough to do, as the British soldier generally has a great capacity for sleep. Notwithstanding the information gleefully imparted to him by his facetiously inclined comrades that "the last bloke wot 'ad that cot pegged out!" he manages to make himself fairly comfortable, serene in the assurance that he is for some time to come at any rate beyond the disturbing influence of "Orderly-sergeants."

After a few days life in hospital becomes very monotonous. Time thus spent is always spoken of in the Army, appropriately enough, as being "in dock." The various epochs of the day are, in order of occurrence, *réveille*, followed by breakfast at 8 A.M., the doctors' morning visit, dinner, tea, and "Lights out." To while away the *ennui* produced by this sort of thing, a good supply of books, periodicals, and games is sent daily from the regimental libraries and recreation-rooms. The ladies of the nursing-staff, too, are very good in this respect, and cheerfully give up a good deal of their scanty leisure to the task of relieving the tedium to which their charges are compulsorily subjected.

A break, too, is also occasioned by the visit of the Field-officer of the day, who during his tour of such duty has to visit each ward for the purpose of ascertaining if any of the inmates thereof have any complaints to make. In order to accomplish this an Orderly is detailed to escort him on his rounds. Upon this individual devolves the duty of flinging open the door and shouting, "Tenshun!" in an unnecessarily fierce manner. "Any complaints?" queries the Field-officer, pausing momentarily on the threshold. "None, sir," is the prompt reply of the senior

IN A MILITARY HOSPITAL

patient present, and away hurries the visitor to put the same question elsewhere.

In connection with these visits of inquiry there is a crusted story of a recruit who, understanding the word "complaint" in its literal sense, created a little consternation by his unorthodox reply to the customary query. As usual, the door was flung open and in clanked the Field-officer, "Tenshun!" thundered his Orderly. "Any complaints?" asked the other. "Yessir—rheumatism in both arms," announced the recruit calmly.

Despite the advance of medical science there is still a good deal of malingering in the Service, although it is nothing like the amount that used to go on. Still, it is a comparatively easy matter for a discontented man to "work his ticket" (*i.e.*, to procure his discharge by being pronounced "medically unfit"). Monthly boards for this purpose assemble in all garrisons before which are brought patients whose discharge from the Service is recommended. Numbers of perfectly genuine cases are annually sent from abroad by every trooper and transport, especially from India and the Mediterranean stations. On their arrival in England these men are sent to Netley Hospital, where it is finally decided whether they are "fit for service in the United Kingdom," or to be discharged altogether as "medically unfit for further service." If the latter, their fate is generally a very sad one. Broken down in health, often quite friendless, and with very little money in their pockets, they soon become quite destitute. What ultimately happens to them no one knows, nor does it seem to be anybody's especial business to find out. Some of them are granted temporary pensions—the merest pittance, which, however, serve to help them to tide over the trying period which elapses before they are able to find suitable employment. These, of course, are the lucky ones. It is to be feared, however, that the casual ward is too often the last refuge of many.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A MILITARY FUNERAL

To the average spectator few sights can be more impressive than that furnished by a military funeral. Nor can he fail to be struck by the immense amount of ceremony observed on such occasions, though the obsequies be but those of the humblest member of Her Majesty's Service. Be he a veteran of hard-fought campaigns, and one on whose breast coveted war medals have glistened, a young soldier of but few months' service, recruit, or band boy, the same ceremony is accorded to all.

I am not here speaking of officers, the arrangements regarding the funerals of whom are slightly different in such particulars as the number of pall-bearers, firing-party, escort, &c., which vary according to the rank of the deceased.

There are many points observed on such occasions which combine to make the scene an impressive one. The solemn, wailing notes of the "Dead March in Saul," the coffin, covered by a Union Jack, borne on a gun-carriage, the slow, measured tramp of comrades following, and the rattle of the farewell volleys fired over the grave, all tend to to make such a scene a memorable one.

On a death occurring in a military hospital—and in Malta this happened with painful frequency—the battalion to which the deceased belonged is immediately informed, in order that they may make the necessary arrangements

A MILITARY FUNERAL

for his interment. Although this does not usually take place until some days after death, yet in many stations abroad the burial follows the death with startling rapidity. In the Mediterranean and in South Africa I have known instances where the funeral party has paid the last respects to a comrade within three hours of his decease. This also is frequently the case in India, where in such climates what would in other places be considered perhaps indecent haste is absolutely imperative.

At the funeral of a Non-commissioned officer or private, in addition to a firing-party of a Sergeant and eighteen or twelve men, the Company or Troop, with its officers, of which the deceased was a member, attend. As many volunteers as wish to do so are also allowed to be present. I have noticed that in this respect the average soldier evinces a little peculiarity. He seems, like a certain class in other walks in life, to have a partiality, amounting at times to a positive mania, for attending funerals—indeed, from such episodes he derives a subtle joy. He is sublimely indifferent as to whether the deceased was personally known to him or not, or even whether he belonged to his own battalion. It is all one in such instances to him, and he makes a point of being present at the obsequies, in order to, as he quaintly puts it, “show respect”!

The band, with drums muffled and draped in crape, heads the procession. On arrival at the hospital mortuary, where a gun-carriage is in waiting, the ranks are opened and the road lined on each side by the men. The coffin, covered by a Union Jack, on which are placed the helmet and side-arms of the dead, is carried out by the pall-bearers, who are furnished by N.C.O.s or men of the deceased's rank. The firing-party “present arms,” and the men salute as the corpse passes.

When the coffin is placed on the gun-carriage, and all is ready, the troops step off in slow-time, the firing-party marching with “arms reversed”—that is, with the muzzle of the rifles pointing to the rear, as a sign of mourning—

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

and the band playing the "Dead March." The air has a strangely moving effect, and in the low rolling of the muffled drums and the mournful wailing of the brass and reeds one can almost fancy that one hears in its strains the actual lamentation for the dead.

"Slow-time" is preserved until the cemetery is reached. Here the procession is met by the officiating clergyman, and the coffin is taken to the chapel, where a short service is held. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" says the chaplain solemnly as the party proceed to the grave-side round which the men gather. The firing-party, with rifles loaded with blank cartridge, stands drawn up a little apart. On the command, "Rest on your arms reversed," the men cross the hands on the butts of their rifles, placing the muzzles on the left toe, and incline the head slightly forward.

At the grave-side the second part of the service is read. As the chaplain comes to the words "Earth to earth," the coffin is lowered, and the firing-party fire three volleys into the air as a final salute, whilst between each round the buglers sound the "Last Post." A handful of earth and a few flowers, perhaps, are thrown into the grave, and all is over. The dead soldier lies in his narrow bed. *Requiescat!*

Immediately after the word is given to return to barracks, and the troops step off in quick-time. With the eminently laudable intention of dispelling any sorrowful reflections which the recent sad spectacle may have occasioned (although, at the same time, with a scarcely correct idea of the fitness of things) bands always play on the return march a lively *mélange* of the latest music-hall melodies of the day. The effect is certainly rather incongruous, and the transition from "The Dead March in Saul" to "We drew his club-money this morning" is apt to somewhat jar upon one.

Despite this trifling disregard of *les convenances*, one cannot fail to be deeply impressed by the scene that has just been witnessed. In Malta the Church of England

A MILITARY FUNERAL

military cemetery, which was situated just outside the lines of Notre Dame Ravelin, formed the last resting-place of many a poor fellow who was destined to never again see the shores of his native country. Many a sunset in Valetta during the long, hot, summer months witnesses a funeral *cortège* winding slowly through the narrow, crowded streets, on its last sad journey. The Maltese check their chatter for a moment and doff their caps reverently ; the busy traffic suddenly ceases to allow the procession to pass, and a solemn stillness ensues. The most reckless veteran, who during his career has been present on scores of such occasions, is affected, while to the recruit the spectacle is indeed a moving one. It is the price of Empire.

CHAPTER XXXV

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THE statistics of crime in the Army—for all breaches of military discipline are classed as “crimes”—as published in the “General Annual Returns of the British Army,” furnish some interesting particulars. Nowadays leniency is more generally in force than was formerly the case, and only offences of a serious nature are sent for trial by court-martial. The less important ones—simple cases of drunkenness, the over-staying of passes, and acts of absence, mild forms of neglect of duty, and untidiness on parade, &c., are summarily disposed of by a few days’ “confinement to barracks,” or perhaps, in the first instance, by a mere admonition. Imprisonment is not resorted to until it is obvious by repeated acts of misconduct that less severe measures fail to deter the offender.

The simplest form of punishment is the award of a period of “confinement to barracks,” extending, as a rule, from one day to a fortnight. There is considerably more in the expression “confinement to barracks” than seems at first to be implied thereby. Men who have been sentenced to so many days’ “C.B.” are known during the period of their duration as “defaulters.” The punishment involves, in addition to keeping them in barracks, a number of hours’ “pack-drill” (exercise in full marching-order) a day, and constant fatigue-duty. As far as possible, all the hardest and most unpleasant work has to be performed

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

by these individuals, in order that their better-behaved comrades may have less to do.

The way of defaulters, like that of transgressors, is not a comfortable one. Their labours for the day commence at *réveille* and expire at tattoo. A quarter of an hour after the sounding of the sleep-disturbing morning bugle, they have to report themselves to the Sergeant of the Quarter Guard. Here they are set to work to clean the Guard-room ; the tables and forms are scrubbed, the floor swept, and the windows polished, &c. When this has been done they return to their barrack-rooms and get ready for an hour's pack-drill. This consists in marching up and down the square in quick-time, under the supervision of the Provost-sergeant, who allows no shirking during the exercise. After dinner they have two more separate hours' punishment drill, and also parade in marching-order at retreat. Besides this, they have to attend all regimental parades that may take place during the day. In the intervals between drill they are employed by the Provost-sergeant in such a manner as he may consider to be both useful and beneficial. I often used to see a little party of defaulters weeding and watering old Sergeant McFarlane's garden ; at other times they would be sweeping out his quarters, or assisting Mrs. McFarlane in many of her domestic duties, such as scrubbing the floor and carrying coal, &c.

Most effective measures are taken to prevent defaulters leaving barracks during the evening, as they have to answer their names to the Provost-sergeant or to one of his assistants every half-hour from retreat to tattoo. All day long, too, the bugle sounds at unexpected moments the "Defaulters' Call"—or "Angels' Whisper," as it is facetiously termed—when there is some extra fatigue to be performed. For one hour only are they allowed comparative peace, and this is in the evening, from seven to eight P.M., during which time only are they permitted to enter the Canteen.

Graver acts of misconduct than are adequately provided

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

for by this form of punishment are met with by sentences of imprisonment. A Commanding-officer can summarily inflict this for a term not exceeding fourteen days. Longer sentences must be awarded by a court-martial. A soldier has always the option of being tried by this form of tribunal instead of submitting to his Commanding-officer's award of imprisonment. But he is seldom well advised in doing so, as a court-martial, on conviction of an offender, is almost sure to inflict a far heavier sentence than that ordered by a man's Colonel, who has endeavoured to deal with him himself with the intention of saving him, as far as possible, from the effects of his offence.

On the first two or three occasions a man will, probably escape with a short term of "cells," such as 96 or 168 hours. If, after this leniency, he still persists in his evil courses, he will receive as much as ten days' or a fortnight's imprisonment. Sometimes, of course, a Commanding-officer has no option in the matter, but is compelled to order a man to be tried. This is in cases of such serious offences as "drunkenness on duty," "insolence to Non-commissioned officers," and "insubordinate conduct," &c. Application is then made by him to the General commanding the garrison for a court-martial to assemble. For the guidance of this officer, the details of the case, as gathered by a "summary of evidence" taken in the presence of the prisoner, are submitted. If the proceedings are approved of an order is issued for his trial.

Three years ago 8,069 men were tried by 9,167 courts-martial, and in 1897 (the last year for which returns are available) the number of trials at home and abroad was 9,069. Before these tribunals 8,139 men were arraigned, against whom was alleged the commission of 13,178 offences. Owing to the fact that many men are tried more than once during the same year, for repeated offences, the number of courts-martial held always exceeds the number of men brought before them.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Military crime is chiefly occasioned by drunkenness ; indeed, almost any breach of discipline is directly traceable to this cause. In addition to imprisonment or other punishment which may be ordered for this offence, a fine is always inflicted. These fines are determined by certain specified rules, and are as follows :

(1) For the first and second instances during a soldier's career, no fine. (Admonition, or a number of days' "C.B.," is awarded instead.)

(2) For the third and every subsequent instance :

(a) If within three months of the previous instance, 7s. 6d.

(b) If over three, and within six of the previous instance, 5s.

(c) If over six, and within nine of the previous instance, 2s. 6d.

(d) If over nine months' charge of an entry, no fine.

(3) "When a soldier has been punished for drunkenness four times during the previous twelve months 2s. 6d. is added to the amount that he is fineable under rule 2."

Men charged with "habitual drunkenness" or "drunkenness on duty" are invariably tried by court-martial. If convicted a fine of £1 is levied, in addition to any term of imprisonment which may be awarded. In 1897 the number of trials for these two offences was 1505. In this year the total number of fines inflicted in connection with drunkenness (whether tried by court-martial or otherwise) was 14,441. A considerable decrease has since taken place.

The number of cases of desertion have fallen considerably of late years, but it is still very high, and averages about two thousand annually. However, a certain number are recaptured, and others join fresh battalions, and this somewhat reduces the *net* loss to the Army.

Another cause by which the service loses men is due to the fact that between 1500 and 2000 are annually dis-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

charged for misconduct, as "incorrigible and worthless." As is the case with deserters, it is well known that many of these "bad bargains" promptly transfer their valuable services elsewhere, without going through the formality of explaining the fact that they have served before or mentioning the cause which led to their discharge.

People of this sort are, when detected, very rightly severely dealt with. "Fraudulent Enlistment" is the bane of the service, and occurs to an incredible extent. In the winter months, when work is slack, and Hyde Park, as an evening resort, fails to commend itself to them, hundreds of men, most of them simply worthless loafers, offer themselves for enlistment. With our small army they are almost bound to be accepted—provided they fulfil the necessary physical qualifications, which are by no means really severe. Such men as these merely regard such an episode as enlistment as a means of spending a jolly Christmas and tiding over the winter. They have not the slightest intention of stopping in the Service one moment after the summer comes, and there is a chance of obtaining a living without submitting to the irksomeness of military discipline and its contingent unpleasant notions about compulsory cleanliness and strict obedience. They make no endeavour whatever to "soldier" and corrupt the better class of recruits with whom they may come in contact. Thousands of pounds are annually lost to the country by the loose interpretation which these people put on their oaths of attestation, and, after receiving a kit and board and lodging and pay for some months, desert—to play the same game elsewhere a few weeks afterwards.

In the old days these people would on conviction have been very properly flogged and sent about their business. It is a great pity that they cannot be treated in the same fashion nowadays. At present, unfortunately, beyond giving them a term of imprisonment and putting them under stoppages to make good the value of the kit that they have fraudulently received, nothing more can be done.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Discipline in the old days was undoubtedly often cruel and savage in the excess to which it was carried, but the cat always deterred men whom no amount of imprisonment now seems to affect. Branding, too, was an objectionable form of punishment, but tattooing—a very small amount would suffice—a detected fraudulent enlistee would most effectually prevent his recommitting this form of offence.

In the last report of the Inspector-General of Military Prisons it is stated that the number of soldiers confined in the military prisons at home and in the Colonies was on the last day of the year 1378, against 1362 on the same date in the year before. This does not include the number of men in Indian prisons, which is always a large one.

The military prisons at home and in the Colonies are fifteen in number, with a staff of about 200. This total includes 15 medical officers and 47 chaplains. At the more important establishments, at Gosport, Brixton, Dublin, and Aldershot, there are officers ranking as Governors, while Chief Warders are in charge of the others. The number of soldiers in confinement in them is at present less than was formerly the case, as the Army Act now provides for the committal to civil prisons of soldiers convicted of felony and certain other serious offences usually punished by penal servitude.

The discipline of a military prison is very severe. All prisoners are subjected to hard labour for the first twenty-eight days. This takes the form of shot-drill and crank-exercise. Shot-drill lasts for an hour and a half at a time, and consists in marching round in a circle, carrying in the hands a 24-lb. shot. The shot is carried for five paces and then deposited in a block. The next five paces are performed with the hands empty, after which the shot deposited by the man in front of him is carried forward five paces by the man behind him to the next block. After a quarter of an hour's shot-drill five minutes' halt is allowed.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

It is a useless form of punishment and is dreaded by the men, who have described it to me as killing work. On one occasion, when on fatigue-duty at the Garrison Provost Cells in Richmond Barracks, I did a little amateur shot-drill, but after five and twenty minutes of it every bone of my body ached terribly, and my legs were attacked with cramp. From the continual stooping my temples throbbed violently, and the muscles of my arms grew so stiff that I could scarcely use them. Altogether I felt fully inclined to endorse the professional opinion of one who had "done time" regarding this description of punishment.*

Another form of hard labour lies in making 10,000 revolutions of a crank every day in one's cell. This requires at least six hours' hard work to perform, and, at the end of this time, a man can with difficulty use his wrists. After a time oakum-picking and sack-making succeed the crank and shot-drill. Prisoners sentenced to long terms are usually, if of good behaviour, selected for employment in the cook-house, or as corridor-sweepers and lamp-cleaners. These offices are always in great request, but they too often fall to the "old lags," who are more at home in prison than anywhere else. Here, by dint of soft-soaping the chaplains—for such gentry always betray an immense amount of anxiety about their spiritual welfare when they are on the wrong side of the prison gates—and currying favour generally, they manage to put their time in fairly comfortably.

Offences against prison discipline are, if serious or repeated, referred to a Board of Visitors for disposal. These boards consist of Field-officers, and assemble whenever a case is reported to them as requiring investigation. The inquiry, which is of the nature of a court-martial, is held in the prison buildings. The offender is brought before them, and all evidence is taken on oath.

* The new prison regulations have to a great extent abolished shot-carrying and crank-drill. For these two forms of punishment other exercises have been introduced.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The charges usually investigated are those of idleness, wilful destruction of property, and insubordinate conduct. As punishments, deprivation of marks and consequent relegation to a lower stage of labour and diet, solitary confinement, or even, in extreme cases, a flogging may be ordered.

Many people have an idea that corporal punishment is now quite unknown in the Service. This, however, is not the case at all. It may always be inflicted on troops and in the field, and, in time of peace, for offences against prison discipline. The number of strokes inflicted at one time with a "cat" or birch must not exceed twenty-five. As a general rule fifteen lashes are ordered for a first occasion. I remember, however, on the "Rock" a man receiving twenty-five lashes for "feigning madness."

A military flogging is not a pleasant sight, but severe as the punishment is it is not accompanied by anything like the brutality which is usually associated with such incidents, and the revolting stories about pieces of flesh being cut out of a man's back by the cat are simply untrue. As a matter of fact, it is only the last few strokes that really break the skin and draw blood at all. I once saw a man's back on the day after he had been flogged, and beyond the marks of a number of red and blue weals extending from the shoulders to the waist there was no damage done. Still, if a warder is actuated by animus, he can make his victim's back like raw beef.

In the military prison at Gibraltar when corporal punishment was to be carried out it was inflicted in this manner:—On the sentence of the Board of Visitors being confirmed by the Governor, to whom the proceedings were first sent for approval, it would be reported to the Chief Warder-in-Charge. At the appointed time the offender would be brought from his cell to one of the exercise yards. Here would be found all the prisoners in the establishment paraded to witness the punishment as a warning to them to refrain from offences which would subject them to the same stern reprisals. A Company of Infantry from South

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

Barracks was always present, who with their bayonets fixed acted as a guard for the time being over the prisoners. The Field-officer of the day who directed the proceedings also attended.

On coming into the yard the culprit would immediately see from the triangle erected in readiness what was before him. This consists of three upright poles about seven feet in height, shaped like a blackboard easel, with cross-bars at the height of the waist and chest. The presiding officer would then read out the "proceedings of the Board of Visitors" and their sentence of so many "lashes with the cat." This instrument has a wooden staff about two and a half feet in length, with three plaited leathern thongs; each thong is finished off by three whipcord lashes, this giving the cat really nine tails.

As soon as the sentence has been announced the culprit is stripped to the waist, a leather stock is buckled round his neck to save it from a chance cut, and he is bound securely to the framework with his wrists stretched above his head. At a signal from the Chief Warder, who counts the lashes, the punishment is inflicted by the warder acting as executioner. A medical officer attends, who is empowered should he think it advisable to order the punishment to be stopped at any moment. When the full number of strokes has been inflicted the prisoner is taken down and conducted to his cell, where his back is dressed.

The punishment is undoubtedly severe, but it is a great deterrent, and if only resorted to in the strictest moderation is productive of good results. At one time the greatest barbarities imaginable were connected with its infliction, and the order-books of a now happily bygone age simply bristled with such atrocities as sentences of three, four, and five hundred lashes.

Here are a few extracts from the Court-martial records of battalions once serving on the "Rock." In far later days, and in England, too, they have been paralleled :

"Private — to receive 1000 lashes with a cat-of-nine-tails; the last fifty of which are to be given by the hands

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

of the common hangman between Southport and Waterport. The Governor orders this prisoner to be brought to the Grand Parade, there to receive as much of the above punishment as he is able to bear at one time, and the rest afterwards."

"Bombardier — to be reduced and to receive 300 lashes but recommended to mercy on account of his long service of upwards of forty years."

Another entry about this period is of rather a gruesome nature.

"Privates A.B. and C.D. are to be executed to-morrow and Private E.F. of the same regiment is to receive 200 lashes under the gallows as the above prisoners are hanging, of the 400 he is sentenced to receive."

Sentences of from 50 to 500 lashes were ordered in a terribly brutal fashion. Drunkenness and desertion, as well as comparatively trivial offences, were invariably punished by the cat, but, as statistics show, it failed to deter, as these classes of offences were then far more common than is the case of late years.

When such barbarities as are indicated in the above paragraphs were of the most common, everyday occurrence it was quite time to relegate to oblivion such a means of punishment. It seldom did any real good and almost always brutalised those who suffered, as it did those who witnessed its infliction.

Although the annual statistics of crime seem to show a decided falling-off in number, it must be taken into consideration that this apparent change for the better is not always so great as the mere record of a series of tables would seem to show. Allowance must be made for the fact that of recent years greater powers of inflicting punishment have been placed in the hands of Commanding-officers. For instance, a few years ago seven days' imprisonment was the longest term that he could award; now, however, he is enabled to save many a man a court-martial by sending him to the cells for a fortnight—formerly a court-martial sentence.

CHAPTER XXXVI

GENTLEMEN RANKERS

It is not generally known what a very large and ever-increasing number of gentlemen there are serving as privates and Non-commissioned officers in the ranks of the British Army. Statistics on this subject cannot, of course, be obtained, but of these "Gentlemen Rankers" the Cavalry naturally absorbs the greater portion. Many of them have ridden—and some owned—horses before enlisting. Again, the *éclat* inseparably associated with the Cavalry, and the smart appearance of their uniform and equipment, as compared with the quieter, but eminently more serviceable, attire of the Linesman, is a great factor in their choice of this branch of the Service. Little, however, do these would-be bold Dragoons and dashing Hussars reckon of the many weary hours in store for them, which they will spend in rubbing, burnishing, and cleaning again and again these same jingling spurs, flashing scabbards, and brilliantly-polished boots, the contemplation of which, from the civilian point of view, has such attractions.

On poetical authority we have it that "it doesn't matter what he was before, or what his parents fancied for his name." This is precisely the case with the Gentleman Ranker. Who he has been, or what he has been, is not of the slightest concern to any one but himself. And even he very soon ceases to care, and philosophically relegates

GENTLEMEN RANKERS

to the regions of the past, as matters of ancient history, the episodes of other days. Henceforth the present and the future alone have any interest for him.

He is very glad to find that his superior officers, as do his comrades of the rank and file, take the same view of the case. So long as he does his duty quietly and unostentatiously he will rub along pretty well, although he must always naturally feel rather like a fish out of water. If, on the other hand, he presumes to trade on his former position, and on the strength of it to give himself airs, he will naturally have a very rough time of it. Although in some few cases the theory that "Jack is as good as his master" may hold good, the Army is nevertheless a great levelling-down school.

In the barrack-room one never knows who one's neighbour is, although one may love him as one's self. And it doesn't do to inquire too closely. He may be descended from a peer of the realm or a peri of Houndsditch, an *habitué* of Whitechapel, or late member of White's: every class has its representatives. While at the Curragh I came across a one-time curate serving his Queen and country in the capacity of a Dragoon. It was after a stiff field-day, and he was swilling beer in the Canteen as if he had never done anything else in his life.

A characteristic of the Gentleman Ranker is his ubiquity. Indeed, "*Hic et ubique*" might very well be his motto, for from "Birr to Bareilly, from Leeds to Lahore," is he to be met with. He perspires and swears on occasions, just as profusely in the Egyptian desert or Indian Camp of Exercise as he does on the breezy Curragh, at the "Shot," or Bermuda.

There are many distinctions, in some cases amounting almost to idiosyncrasies, about the Gentleman Ranker, by which he may always be easily recognised. Although the regulation uniform and get-up make one man look very much like another—in fact, almost as if they had all been turned out to a sealed pattern—yet the genuine Gentleman Ranker stands alone. He is *in* the ranks, but

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

not *of* the ranks, and his comrades-in-arms very soon note that he is not one of themselves. He even speaks a different language, for although he is perhaps wont to swear pretty hard at times he is profane without being obscene—a subtle distinction which is not recognised by the rank and file in general. Another peculiarity of his is that he has a respect for the aspirate, and an idea regarding its properties that differs considerably from the prevailing one.

In matters of personal appearance, again, his opinions are not usually the generally accepted ones of those around him. The peculiar glories of “saucy-cut strides,” in conjunction with a “peaky-blinder” style of head-dress, fail to commend themselves to his singularly unresponsive mind. The possession of these many little characteristics generally earns for him some such appellation as “Toff” Smith or “Dandy Jones,” which sticks to him for the remainder of his career.

His superior attainments generally mark him out for speedy promotion. Sometimes his early advancement incurs a good deal of jealousy, but by the exercise of a little tact he soon finds that he can hold his own. Of course he is always more or less an outsider, and consequently his great idea must be to beat the men at their own trade. By sheer merit alone can he manage this, and proving himself their superior in shooting, drilling, the maintaining of discipline, and educational achievements, earns, as a claim, promotion, which was perhaps given him in the first instance as a favour. With three stripes on his arm (the outward and visible sign of his rank) his position is considerably improved, and, although the Sergeants' Mess is not quite the same as a drawing-room, he will find plenty of pleasant companions and good fellows there.

Gentleman Rankers may, for the purpose of convenience, be divided into the following classes:

(1) Those who have failed to obtain a commission in the usual way, *viâ* Sandhurst and Woolwich, or the Militia,

GENTLEMEN RANKERS

and accordingly enlist with the direct intention of obtaining one.

(2) Those whose education is good, but yet not of a sufficiently high standard to obtain for them employment for which they are socially fitted. These, like the prodigal of old, cannot dig, and to beg they are ashamed.

(3) Those who have a strong predilection for a military career, but whom want of means has prevented serving as officers.

(4) Those who, disgusted with the difficulty of maintaining a decent position on their salary as clerks, &c., and the drudgery incidental to such a career, join the Service simply for the want of something to do.

Strange as it may appear, some of the best soldiers are furnished from this last class.

There is also a small and fluctuating proportion who enlist *sub rosa*. These are, for the most part, ne'er-do-wells, whose enlistment is the result of some University freak, or the well-merited incurrence of the paternal wrath with regard to certain unpermissible debts, or perhaps *affaires de cœur*. Such as these enlist for what they term a "lark." Very soon, however, they tire of "soldiering," for a course of officers' mess fatigues, scrubbing barrack-room floors and blackleading grates, &c., takes the novelty off the "lark" in a most surprising fashion. These men never make soldiers, and unless their friends buy them their discharge they usually take an early opportunity of deserting. And this, by the way, is about the best thing they can do. The Service does not want them, and, instead of raising the tone of the rank and file, their presence rather tends to the reverse. Their attempts to import the air of the boudoir into barracks are naturally attended by failure. It is true that their comrades are often not of a particularly select description, but this is surely no sufficient reason why they should hold themselves so severely aloof, and affect to ignore their existence. Ill-placed superciliousness of this description is deeply resented.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

It by no means follows that, because a gentleman enlists, he does so with the primary idea of obtaining a commission. Very often this is not his idea at all. Many a one may be met with serving, contentedly enough, in the humble sphere of an N.C.O. He knows very well that without ample private means he will be unable to maintain his position as an officer with any degree of comfort. He, therefore, philosophically makes up his mind to remain in the ranks, and as such, quietly and unobtrusively, does his duty to the best interests of himself, his comrades, and the Service generally.

Although there are few Cavalry regiments whose ranks do not contain at least a dozen or more gentlemen, this branch of the Service by no means absorbs the whole number of those who have renounced their civilian prospects and embarked on the profession of arms. A good many act on the advice of more experienced friends and join the Infantry. Here the work, rough and uncongenial as it is, is by no means so hard, and promotion, at any rate, is, as a rule, considerably quicker. Nor should it be forgotten that if, as is the case with most Rankers, they intend, when their hoped-for commission is at last obtained, to serve in the Line, their previous Cavalry experience will be of but little avail to them. Nevertheless, commissions from the Cavalry into the Infantry, and *vice versa*, are occasionally granted.

Between ten and fifteen combative commissions from the ranks are granted annually. It would here, perhaps, be as well to state the latest regulations on the subject :

1. The candidate for promotion shall, *when recommended* (i) not be of lower rank than that of corporal ; (ii) not have less than two years' service ; (iii) be under twenty-four years of age ; (iv) hold a first-class certificate of education, including English history and general geography, or possess the qualifications in lieu thereof, as laid down in the Army School Regulations ; (v) have a clear defaulters-sheet ; (vi) be unmarried ; (vii) the candidate shall, *when selected*, have attained the rank of Sergeant, and be under twenty-six years of age.

2. The above regulations are not applicable to the case of candidates who have performed specially meritorious service or distinguished service in the field.

GENTLEMEN RANKERS

The qualifications in lieu of a first-class educational certificate, as referred to in Rule I., are those of having matriculated at a University, or having passed certain Civil Service examinations of a similar standard.

From the above regulations it will be readily seen that the days of rushing through all the stages, from that of a private to a Second Lieutenancy, in a couple of years or so, as was formerly the case, are now over. Under the most favourable conditions at least six or eight years must elapse from the date of enlistment to the obtaining of the coveted commission.

When a candidate has succeeded in getting recommended by his Colonel his name is placed in order of its arrival on a list at the War Office, which perhaps contains fifty or sixty others. This list can only be worked off at the rate of twelve or fifteen a year, and of late the number of commissions from the ranks has dropped considerably. The probable reason for the present slowness of promotion by this channel is that there are always such numbers of candidates qualified by the Sandhurst course waiting for appointments that their prior claims have to be settled; as it is, months often elapse between a cadet leaving the Military College and his posting to a battalion.

Writing on the subject of "Gentlemen in the Ranks," Captain Younghusband, in the *Queen's Commission*, says, "There is nothing in a private soldier's career which can justly be considered to qualify him to become an officer." This, of course, is a mere matter of opinion, but it strikes one all the same as a little too sweeping a conclusion to make. It is open to question whether the writer draws the line hard and fast at private soldiers, or if he includes in this indictment N.C.O.s of the rank of Sergeant and Warrant-officers.

Leaving the reader to make his own deductions, I will endeavour to point out those facts which, in my opinion, do most distinctly qualify the Gentleman Ranker for a commission. In the first place, his personal experience of

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

the men over whom, as an officer, he will be called upon to rule, will be of the greatest service, both to himself and to his brother-officers. During the years in which he has so intimately lived and moved and had his being with them, he will have acquired a very thorough knowledge of the many grievances (legitimate and otherwise) under which they consider themselves labouring. When called upon to administer justice, too, he will be better enabled to deal with the case, and to make due allowance for all the petty tyrannies, slights, and indignities which a certain class of N.C.O.s habitually inflict on their subordinates. He will, for instance, be better able to immediately detect the trumped-up charge of an overbearing "Non-com." and at a glance to distinguish between the partly screened offender—of whom the complainant is probably more than half afraid—and the unfortunate Company scapegoat, whose offences are invariably magnified by his over-zealous N.C.O.s.

On the other hand, knowing full well the many difficulties which Non-commissioned officers, and especially the junior ones, have in maintaining proper control over their men, all offences against discipline will by him be most severely dealt with. There are some officers who when dealing with these cases seem to consider such charges as "hesitating to obey an order," and "having an insubordinate look," as being of a trifling nature. In point of fact they sometimes even go so far as to inquire wrathfully, "What the deuce they mean by bringing the man up?"

This sort of thing is discouraging, and is by no means conducive to the proper maintenance of discipline or the upholding of his position by a Non-commissioned officer. Not so is the case with the man who has been through the mill himself. He knows very well that here leniency is out of place, and invariably treats such offences with draconic severity. The natural result is that his N.C.O.s find their difficulties considerably lessened and the discipline of the Company is immensely improved.

Perhaps the most important qualification of the Gentle-

GENTLEMEN RANKERS

man Ranker is that he possesses—especially if he has been a Colour-sergeant—a thorough knowledge of the manner of keeping regimental accounts. It is a well-known and undeniable fact—as many an officer has found to his cost—that the Colour-sergeant is practically the man who “runs” the Company. The position of the officer in these cases seems to be degenerating into that of merely assisting this N.C.O. Nominally responsible for all items of Company cash received or expended, he very soon perceives that he is entirely in the hands of his “Flag.” With regard to all such details as the pay of his men, the recovery of stoppages for “necessaries and kit,” fines for drunkenness, and the keeping of his Company’s savings-bank ledgers, he does little more than sign his name as a voucher for their correctness.

I do not for one moment assert that these N.C.O.s as a rule abuse their position; only such instances have occurred, and if Company officers, owing to their ignorance of the subject or inaptitude for the work involved, leave all the financial arrangements in the hands of their Colour-sergeants, they have only themselves to thank if anything goes wrong. It would, by the way, be as well if instruction in this important branch of military education were included in the curriculum at Sandhurst and Woolwich. Instead of this being the case, the newly-joined Subaltern comes to his battalion absolutely ignorant upon these matters. For this reason he has to spend a good deal of time in mastering something of the system in which military accounts are kept.

CHAPTER XXXVII

DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?

THE question at the head of this chapter is not one that is as a rule asked by a recruit on his enlistment. It is not until at a considerably later period he has settled down in his new surroundings and looked about him a little that the financial prospects of a career in the ranks engage his attention at all.

With the disappearance of the gloss upon his tunic, however, occurs the fading of much of the glamour with which he has previously invested the soldier's career. The recruit who but three months ago was sublimely indifferent to the various ordinances affecting his financial position now regards the least of these with a coldly critical eye.

Then it is that he is apt to reduce everything to pounds shillings and pence, and to endeavour to see how he stands in comparison to the position in civil life occupied by his former companions. Those who enlist with the object of speedily making a fortune thereby, or of even achieving a modest competence, will find that they have been labouring under a considerable delusion. The fact is, the lowest pension cannot be obtained by privates in less than fourteen years, and then only in special circumstances. As a rule, no one is eligible for these allowances until they shall have been discharged to civil life on the completion of the full term of twenty-one years' service.

DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?

They then receive the highest rates for which they have qualified.

These range from about 4s. to 1s. 1d. per diem, according to the rank of the pensioner. Sergeant-majors and Band-masters naturally have their allowances calculated on the highest scale in force and are really well provided for on retirement. Sergeants (who have held such rank continuously for the last twelve out of a total of twenty-one years' service) can draw from 2s. 9d. to 3s. 3d., and Corporals, similarly qualified, 1s. 8d.

On several occasions reference has already been made to the compulsory deductions on account of such items as washing, messing, recreation-clubs, "barrack-damages," &c., which are made from a soldier's pay. By the terms of the new regulations, which came into force last year, the sum total of this money has now been reduced by the omission therefrom of the old "messing stoppage" of 3d. per diem. The remaining items, however, still figure conspicuously on the debit side of a soldier's monthly pay-sheet.

It is this that brings home to him very clearly this fact—that there is a considerable difference between the amount *credited* to him and the amount that he will actually receive. Reading-rooms and libraries, cricket and football matches, with shooting clubs and all the other attractions enumerated therein, look very well on the Government circulars, but they are not exactly free gifts. However diligently the would-be recruit examines the placard relating to these various "Advantages," he will not find this circumstance unduly obtruded upon his notice. Very possibly he will imagine that to be credited as a private with 1s. per diem means that he will enjoy an income of 7s. per week. At the end of the first month, however, he will receive a somewhat rude awakening when the following "Statement of Accounts" is presented to him :

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

No. 3247. PRIVATE JOHN JONES.

January 1899.

K.O.L.R.N.B. Fusiliers.

CREDITS.	DEBITS.
<p>To thirty-one days' \pounds s. d. pay at 1s. . . . 1 11 0</p>	<p>To thirty-one days' s. d. washing at $\frac{1}{2}$d. . . 1 3$\frac{1}{2}$ " Cricket or football club subscription . . 0 3 " Shooting club . . . 0 3 " Library 0 3 " Making clothing . . 0 1 " Haircutting 0 1</p>
<p>Total credits . \pounds 1 11 0</p>	<p>Total debits . \pounds 0 2 2$\frac{1}{2}$</p>
<p>Balance Cr. . . . \pounds 1 8s. 9$\frac{1}{2}$d.</p>	

In connection with this it must most distinctly be borne in mind that this balance of \pounds 1 8s. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is not one that can be expected as a matter of course. It can only be received by a private soldier during those particular months when his pay happens to be unaffected by any such very ordinary expenses as are entailed by repairs to his boots or uniform, or the purchase of articles of kit. Such months as these, it need be scarcely pointed out, are remarkably few and far between. A week's manœuvres will so damage a suit that its owner will find himself practically compelled to replace it with a new one. Then the frequent route-marches and field-days that he undertakes are decidedly detrimental to his boot leather. Again, as has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, only one supply of shirts, socks, brushes, towels, &c., is issued to a soldier during the whole of his service. Even the most careful of men are apt to find it a little difficult to make a couple of shirts and a razor (valued with case at 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.) meet the wear and tear of seven years. In the same way—and

DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?

at the risk of being thought hypercritical—it might well be argued that two tins of blacking and a single cake of soap during this period is not a lavish allowance.

But these are comparatively small matters ; it is the cost of a pair of trousers, or a new tunic, or what not, that makes such a serious hole in a month's pay. If the material from which the clothing is manufactured were of decent quality, the annual allowance would with care be almost sufficient. As, however, the greater part of it is little better than shoddy, this is not the case at all. A red serge "frock" value 9s. 4*d.* and a pair of trousers costing 8s. 2*d.* will not, however careful a man may be, last him for more than four months or so. At the end of this period they will have developed such decided signs of shabbiness that they will be rendered unfit for wear—except on the roughest of fatigue duties. If a suit be kept for rough work the trousers will after five or six weeks become frayed and worn out, while the "frock" gets discoloured and bursts at the seams. A man doing his regimental duty (with the numerous guards and picquets that thereby fall to him) cannot possibly manage without purchasing at least two pairs of trousers and one "frock" per annum. This, together with such other items as socks, shirts, towels, brushes, &c., as he may require them, will cost him from 25s. to at least 30s. out of his pay.

A man who is not exceedingly careful of his uniform, &c., will find himself continually in debt for extra kit. If he appear on parade or on guard in an old and untidy suit—and there is nothing like a guard-bed for rubbing the nap off a new tunic—he is promptly "put down" for a fresh suit. I have known men to draw no pay for weeks at a time owing to being under stoppages incurred partly for new clothing and partly for deficiencies in "necessaries." These stoppages are undoubtedly a large factor in the enormous number of desertions that occur every year. Sometimes it happens that men—careless and untidy ones, certainly—are mulcted in these accounts

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

of as much as £4 or £5 in a single year. This sort of thing naturally disgusts them, and the consequence is that they often embark on a course of buying and selling—and occasionally stealing—kit. Severe punishment follows on conviction, and this, in turn, leads to desertion.

The item "barrack-damages," too, is another bone of contention. The deduction on this account, is not much in itself—probably averaging about 3*d.* per *ensem*—but its wholesale levying upon every one alike is felt to be a distinct grievance. Now, however, this is very much less so than was once the case, as the practice of bringing these charges home to individuals, instead of calmly mulcting a whole Company in them, has lately been introduced. The results of this ruling are most beneficial, as it was obviously unfair to make the occupants of one barrack-room pay for the damages that have taken place in another. Until a very short time ago this was always happening, and men, on their return from furlough or detachment, would find themselves debited in some small sum for broken windows, &c., that had been damaged during their absence from barracks.

When Lance-corporals have gained sufficient seniority to be numbered among the first thirty-two of their rank they receive extra-duty pay at the rate of threepence per diem. Until they shall have gained such seniority they perform the extra duty without any increase of pay whatever. The period that elapses between their first appointment and the date of their coming "on pay" may be anything from six weeks to three or four years. In my own case it was just eighteen months, but several of my juniors were forced to wait considerably more than twice this interval. The excessive slowness of promotion in this grade is occasioned by the fact that, while there may be fifty or more probationary Lance-corporals, the "establishment" (that is, the number allowed to draw extra pay) of such is only thirty-two per battalion. Consequently the juniors have a long list to climb.

DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?

Financially speaking, the rank of Corporal is the best-paid one. These Non-commissioned officers receive 1s. 8d. per diem, which is subject to the same deductions as are made from the 1s. of the private. Accordingly, their clear pay amounts to £2 9s. 5½d. per month. With Sergeants, however, the case is different, as upon them are made so many extra claims in virtue of their position that their monthly balance dwindles to a painfully small figure. Chief among the deductions entailed by their rank are those of 1s. 6d. for Mess-subscriptions, and 2s. 6d. for the cricket, football, and shooting clubs, &c., to which they are practically compelled to belong. Then there are frequent additional levies in respect of dances, smoking-concerts, and other entertainments, organised by their enterprising Mess-committees. After these have been settled another half-sovereign will be absorbed on account of bătman and washing expenses. At the end of the month, therefore, a Sergeant is seldom troubled with an unduly swollen credit-balance.

The charges on these last two accounts are not compulsory in the sense of their being debited from a Sergeant's pay before he receives it, as are all the other items. I have, however, included them, giving the amounts usually paid, as a Sergeant must pay some one for doing his washing, and is also, in virtue of his position, practically bound to employ a bătman.

This functionary acts as his valet, and relieves him of the work of cleaning his equipment and getting ready for parade and guard-duty, &c., as it is considered *infra dig.* for N.C.O.s of this rank to perform such duties for themselves. Another very cogent reason for their employment is that Sergeants who give proper attention to their numerous regimental duties have no leisure to devote to the enormous amount of cleaning and polishing that is continually necessary to keep their accoutrements in proper condition.

All these different drains fall particularly hard on Lance-sergeants. Despite the fact that their pay is 2s.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

per diem (while a Sergeant's is 2s. 4d.) they have to bear an equal share of all these extra charges. In one item only is a difference made in their favour. This is in connection with the 1s. 6d. monthly Mess-subscription, which until they become full-fledged Sergeants is reduced by one half. This concession is also granted to married Sergeants, as their domestic duties are considered to prevent them making as much use of the institution as can their single brethren. Whether this be really the case or not is an extremely moot point.

Before the recent abolition of the "grocery-stoppage" came into force last year, all single members of the Sergeants' mess paid 18s. 1d. a month for their meals. This was at the rate of 7d. per diem (3d. compulsory, plus 4d. voluntary) and made rather an inroad into a man's income. In Malta, the Mess-caterer supplemented the Government ration of bread and meat by such necessary articles of diet as tea, coffee, milk, sugar, potatoes, &c., and also undertook to provide us with meat or fish for breakfast, and an occasional pudding for dinner. A different arrangement is now in force and the members of a Sergeants' mess pay for these items at a somewhat reduced rate.

In abolishing the "grocery-stoppage" of 3d. per diem the Government somewhat discounted their liberality by coincidentally discontinuing the old grant of "deferred pay." This, which was issued at the rate of 2d. per diem, amounted to the nice little sum of £21 on a soldier's transfer after seven years' service to the Reserve. Instead of this, he now receives on discharge a "gratuity" of £1 for each year of colour-service. Thus his *net* increase is a little over one penny a day, and not *three-pence* as civilians and recruits are apt to think. Again, if, instead of going into the Reserve after seven years' colour-service, a man intends to remain in his regiment for a further term of five years, he now receives on discharge to civil life a "gratuity" of £12 in place of the former "deferred pay" of £36.

DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?

There is one financial asset of the soldier which I have not yet mentioned. It is the rate of good-conduct pay of which he may be in receipt. This, as the name implies, is not issued wholesale to every one, and, therefore, I have omitted to include it in the specimen monthly account that I have given.

Warrant and Non-commissioned officers, for instance, are ineligible for its receipt, as the professional conduct of occupants of these ranks is held to be above being affected by pecuniary rewards. Private soldiers and Lance-corporals, however, are not expected to live up to quite so high a standard. They are therefore recompensed in respect of the measure of virtue they display according to the following scale :

One penny per diem, after two years' service, if clear of a "regimental entry" (a sentence involving fine or imprisonment, or confinement to barracks for more than seven days continuously) during the whole of this period.

Twopence per diem, after six years' service, if in uninterrupted possession of 1*d.* G.C. pay for the two years immediately preceding.

Threepence per diem, after twelve years' service, if in uninterrupted possession of 2*d.* G.C. pay for the two years immediately preceding.

Another penny is earned after eighteen years, under the same conditions. Altogether, as much as sixpence a day may be earned on this account in twenty-eight years.*

For each penny thus obtained a soldier is entitled to wear a chevron (known as a "good-conduct badge") on his left arm. It is the privilege of wearing these, more than the money value attached thereto, that a soldier prizes so highly. A man possessing such decorations will always be very careful how he conducts himself, lest by

* Under certain conditions fourpence may be gained in sixteen years and sixpence in twenty-six years.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

a sudden slip aside he should be deprived of them. They are particularly valuable assets, in that they are always eloquent evidence of years of good character, trustworthiness, and sobriety.

As is the nature of most things, G.C. badges are lost a great deal easier than they are gained. A single hasty or ill-advised act, committed perhaps in a moment of thoughtlessness, may, at one blow, deprive a man of the fruit of years of good conduct and watchfulness. It is, therefore, his constant endeavour to avoid getting into trouble and thereby imperilling his chances of wearing the G.C. medal. This is awarded to those N.C.O.s and men whose characters have, for eighteen years, been considered irreproachable by their Commanding-officers. The medal is not one that is lightly gained, and is a decoration that is always highly prized.

A soldier wearing a G.C. badge is deprived of it on receiving any sentence entailing a fine or imprisonment. He can, however, only lose one badge at a time. If, therefore, he is in possession of two, when sentenced to imprisonment he can, on returning to duty, still wear one good-conduct badge. A man who has lost a badge for an act of misconduct can regain it in a period of six months, if, during that time, he avoids a "regimental entry," that is, a punishment exceeding seven days' "C.B.," or fine, or imprisonment.

As with those of crime, statistics of good conduct would seem at first to show a most satisfactory improvement. But this is to a considerable extent due to the fact that it is now not only a more difficult matter to lose a badge when once earned, but also because at present they can be more easily regained than was formerly the case. Up to about four or five years ago a sentence of eight days' "C.B." involved the forfeiture of a badge, but now a man may receive any number of days' "C.B." and still wear his badge, in common with the most well-behaved soldier in existence. This often permits a man who is continually figuring on the barrack square as a defaulter to walk

DOES IT PAY TO ENLIST?

about with as many G.C. chevrons on his arm as can another who bears an irreproachable character. Again, formerly when a badge was lost it took a man a year to regain it, but nowadays half that period suffices.

Whether, on the whole, the average soldier who reaches no higher rank than that of private improves his financial position by joining the Army or not is perhaps rather an open question. The odds are, I am inclined to think, that, if he has not displayed sufficient ability to gain promotion, with the higher pay of such rank, in civil life he would probably have occupied but little better position than that of a labourer. This is an age of fierce competition, in the Service, as in other walks in life, and those who do not seek to come to the front will not find any one keenly anxious to assist them to get there. The positions of Warrant and Non-commissioned officers, of the rank of Sergeant and Colour-sergeant especially, compare very favourably with almost any that civil life can offer to such men.

To sum up briefly, I may say that I consider that, as a general rule, a respectable, steady man is better off, all round, in the Army—especially if he is anything of a mechanic, and join the Engineers or Army Ordnance Department (in both of which the pay is really very good)—than if employed in the civilian capacity which would probably have fallen to him. Of course there are the inevitable exceptions, and a man may be following the plough who would make a good Sergeant-major, just as a Lance-corporal or private may be wasting in the bayonet exercise talents which would bring him to eminence in more peaceful pursuits. Space, however, prevents my dwelling upon them here. They only serve to prove the rule—that intelligent and well-conducted men are fairly certain to receive promotion, but idle, dishonest, intemperate, and generally worthless characters may be quite sure of having anything but an easy time of it during their sojourn in the ranks.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

THERE is an old jingle—and one to which, when the fifes are playing it, regiments so often step—

*Oh, the Sergeant-major 'listed me,
And treated me unkindly,
For he took me away from those I loved,
And the girl I left behind me.*

Only, so potent is the attraction of the red coat and its accompanying blare of trumpet and roll of drum, that sometimes the girl he leaves behind him exercises her feminine prerogative, and, changing her mind, follows the path trod by her red-coated swain, and eventually makes her first acquaintance with married life in the Army. Then it is that the veil is lifted from the glamour of the military career, which henceforth presents itself in all its stern reality.

There is a very prevalent idea that the British soldier is by regulation absolutely debarred from entering into the estate of holy matrimony under any circumstances whatever. Yet this is not really the case at all, and nowadays the way of the intending Benedict is (provided he fulfils certain conditions) made comparatively easy. So much so is this the case that at times it almost seems as if marriage for the rank and file were actually encouraged. Until comparatively recently, however, matrimony and "soldering" were held to be by those in authority over

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

them utterly incompatible with the proper execution of military duty. Such unions, accordingly, were sternly discouraged. The men's wives were not officially recognised, nor was any provision for quarters made even to the favoured few to whom permission to marry had been reluctantly given. Their lot, indeed, was an unenviable one, and their surroundings such that any instinct of decency or womanliness must speedily have been eradicated from the unfortunate girls who had ventured to brave all and to throw in their lot with a soldier. It will hardly be believed that barely five-and-thirty years ago married men with their wives and children occupied barrack-rooms in common with the troops. A corner roughly screened by a blanket formed their sole means of privacy. From the foul language and filthily obscene jests of the men (who were then of a far lower class than is now the case) there was no escape. Little wonder, then, that young children brought up in such an atmosphere lisped brutal oaths before they had learned their meaning.

The next advance in the way of securing a little decency for the women was the setting apart of certain barrack-rooms for the accommodation of half a dozen families together. By this arrangement—extremely inadequate as it was—the promiscuous herding together of married and unmarried and the children of the former was certainly avoided, although the over-crowding to which the families were still subjected was but little improved.

It must be remembered that these remarks apply only to those who had married "with permission"; as for those who had taken this step without previously obtaining the official sanction, their lot can only be dimly imagined.

As usually happens, the uncomprisingly unfavourable manner in which the authorities regarded married men defeated itself, and the numbers of those who had married "without leave" increased so vastly that they were at

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

length reluctantly compelled to recognise matrimony for the rank and file as a natural, albeit most reprehensible, contingency.

"The Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Army," as is the somewhat cumbersome title of what is more familiarly known as the "Soldiers' Bible," lay down in precise terms the conditions to which a soldier must first conform if he wishes to participate in the privileges accruing to the blessed state of being "married on strength." The subject is prefaced by a very significant announcement in the following terms, enjoining "Commanding-officers of Corps, who have ample experience of the very great inconvenience arising from the improvident marriages of soldiers, to discountenance such marriages, and to explain to the men that the inconvenience and distress naturally accruing therefrom are serious and unavoidable, particularly when Corps are ordered to embark for foreign Service."

The conditions under which a man may be registered on the "married roll" are these :

"Every Non-commissioned officer and soldier is to obtain the consent of his Commanding-officer, and to state the *name, condition, and character* of the woman he proposes to marry. In the case of a Sergeant no specified term of service is required ; but all men below that rank must have completed seven years' service, and be in possession of at least one good conduct badge. A balance of not less than £5 in the savings bank should, in all cases, be considered a desirable qualification. If a man have the required length of service and a good-conduct badge, the Commanding-officer may use his discretion in granting him permission to marry—in anticipation of a vacancy on the married roll—but such permission will not carry with it any privileges until the vacancy occurs. It will not be necessary for a Warrant-officer to obtain the consent of his Commanding-officer, but he should inform him that he intends to marry."

These quaintly worded instructions afford food for reflection. The asking of an amorously inclined trooper, for instance, to "state the character of the woman he proposes to marry" is a little startling. Again, at first sight, that "desirable qualification," embraced by "a balance of not less than £5" at one's bankers, does not

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

seem much with which to embark on the perilous sea of matrimony. Still, it must be borne in mind that the soldier has certain advantages not shared by civilians in connection with his position. The humble shilling a day of the private, subject though it be to many deductions, has not to supply house-rent, gas-bills, water-rate, fuel, doctors' bills (as far as medicine in quarters goes), and education, as have the incomes of civilians.

When a soldier is placed "on the strength," he is given quarters consisting of, as a rule, two rooms, one of which is fitted with a small range and used as a kitchen. These matrimonial bowers are provided with a strictly limited amount of furniture, of the variety generally advertised as "plain, but substantial." His household effects, all of which are plentifully emblazoned with the Government crest—a particularly aggressive-looking broad arrow—comprise two narrow and extremely hard iron bed-cots, provided with paillasses and bolsters stuffed with straw; pillows, by the way, are deemed superfluous luxuries, and are, accordingly, not supplied at all. There is the usual allowance of sheets and blankets; and the remainder of the household effects consist of a small deal table, form, and stool, a couple of coal-boxes, zinc bath-tub, large tin pail, poker, fender, and fire-shovel.

In most stations now the paillasses and bolsters for all ranks are stuffed with hair in lieu of straw. The new pattern is a decided improvement, as straw has a peculiar tendency to resolve itself after a few days' use into a number of hard knobs, which effectually banish sleep. Moreover, so debased is the mind of the average celibate Linesman that he has even been known, when told off for the duty of filling the paillasses of the married ladies with straw, to take the opportunity of inserting a few sharp-cornered flints, or anything else that came handy, as protests against being employed on such duty.

All the above articles are fairly substantial, even if they are not strikingly beautiful in design. And such they would require to be for the rough service to which they

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

are subjected. The zinc bath-tub is probably the most cherished utensil of the lot, and always comes in handy for some domestic purpose or other. Its uses are manifold, and extend from baking "sea-pies" therein, to holding the water for washing the baby.

From the temporary nature of the occupancy of such dwellings (two years at a time is about the longest period during which the same family will live in them) none of the decorations and attempts at beautifying—usually so dear to feminine minds—can be indulged in. *Ut migraturus habita* (as some one has remarked of them) must ever be the motto blazoned on their white-washed walls; for, save for a picture or two, or some such easily-removed adornment, their classical simplicity must be preserved. Even the holes made by nails must be filled up on the surrendering of the quarters, or the occupants will become liable to a charge of one penny for each at the assessment of "barrack damages" that takes place at the "handing-over" inspection. Another very potent factor that tends to prohibit extensive decoration is the extremely small amount of baggage allowed. This is limited, in the case of a married Sergeant to $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt., and for privates to 1 cwt.

The married soldier's income is chiefly supplemented—and very considerably too—by the money that his wife earns for washing the linen of the men of her husband's Company. For this purpose, in the Infantry, every man is stopped a halfpenny per diem from his pay; and in the Cavalry, where they enjoy higher scales of remuneration, a penny. Fuel, water, mangles, and the use of a washing-room and drying-green are provided in barracks. The washing is proportionately divided among the women, who each thus earns the very welcome addition of four or five pounds, or more, a month. In addition to this, the officers also bestow their custom on the wives of the married men of their Companies. As the husbands are generally employed in some such capacity as servants, grooms, Mess-waiters, &c., all of which bring grist to the mill, in the shape of

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

extra-duty pay, the man who is married "on the strength" is, from a financial point of view, at any rate, really very well off.

Especially is this the case if he happen to be stationed abroad. In the United Kingdom, for some inexplicable reason, the necessity for feeding a man's wife and children is ignored. In India and the Colonies, where provisions are generally cheaper, a soldier's wife receives daily half a pound of meat and the same amount of bread for herself. Should she have any family, she is entitled to a quarter of a pound of each for each girl under sixteen or boy under fourteen years of age. The husband, too, draws (as do all soldiers when stationed abroad) a pound of meat daily, in place of the three-quarters of a pound that he would at home. Whatever else they may lack, I can vouch for the fact that, under these conditions, the families of soldiers, "married on the strength," can never want for food. How many people of their class in civil life can say the same?

The regulation coal allowance is in home stations 18 lbs. a day. The individual soldier, however, generally has a deeply-rooted idea that the amount that he actually receives, which is drawn weekly, is some pounds less than this. Whether there is any foundation for this or not is rather an open question perhaps, but the method in vogue of issuing the fuel allowance is certainly a somewhat rough-and-ready one. An iron tub, popularly supposed to hold 80 lbs., is more or less filled up and a few sticks of wood placed on top. In its journey from the coal store to the married quarters (chiefly by the manual labour of the unmarried men, who do not always appreciate at its true worth the privilege of carrying these boxes for them), each is apt to occasionally get lightened of a portion of its contents by the surreptitious removal of a few pounds, which are "accidentally" upset.

On the whole, it will be readily granted that the man who has entered the married state with the sanction of his Commanding-officer is, in comparison with a civilian

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

artizan or mechanic of his own station, decidedly well off. His surroundings, if not luxurious, are at any rate comfortable, and he enjoys many solid and substantial advantages. Among these are those of free quarters, fuel, light, water, medical attendance, and education for his family, and, if stationed abroad, rations for them as well.

Sitll, there is another contingency to be taken into consideration. It occasionally happens, even in these piping times of peace, that a married soldier is, by the exigencies of the Service, separated from his family. Perhaps he is sent somewhere "on detachment," or is "going through a course" of something at Aldershot, until the completion of which the wife of his bosom can know him no more. Such courses of instruction may be in Mounted Infantry duties, signalling, telegraphy, gymnastics, range-finding, or field-works, &c. When this is the case the Government makes a daily allowance of fourpence for his wife and three halfpence for each girl under sixteen, and the same for each boy under fourteen. This is not exactly lavish, but, with the money earned by washing, and other etceteras, the family generally manage to exist in a fairly comfortable manner.

When a battalion changes its quarters, and the married women, with their families, are left behind, to follow later on, the women and children are sent to their homes at the public expense. For their support during the absence of their husbands they receive daily eightpence and twopence respectively. In foreign stations these pittances vary slightly; and, in all cases, a trifling allowance is made for fuel and light. Married soldiers on foreign service, separated from their families, are, as a supplement to this allowance from the Government, compelled to contribute daily to their support fourpence for their wives and a penny for each child under sixteen. The total stoppage from their pay on this account, however, must not exceed sixpence per diem when supplied with field rations. Sergeants, on account of their higher rate of emolument, contribute eightpence and three halfpence respectively, so

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

long as this deduction does not exceed one shilling daily. When drawing the ordinary barrack rations of bread and meat these amounts are reduced, in the case of Sergeants, to fourpence and one halfpenny, and for the rank and file to twopence and one halfpenny, the total stoppage in each case not to exceed sixpence and threepence daily.

All these regulations, it must be remembered, are framed for the benefit of and apply only to those who are married "on the strength," as is termed the official sanction to a soldier's union.

As the number of those who are placed on the married roll is limited for the rank and file to 4 per cent. (increased to 12 per cent. on embarkation for India), it naturally happens that the British soldier, whose proclivities for matrimony are proverbial, frequently takes the bull by the horns, and, despite the mandates of his Commanding-officer, marries without such permission. There are also a number of men who have "committed matrimony," as my Colour-sergeant used to express it, before enlistment, but have concealed the fact on their attestation. Concerning them it is laid down in the aforementioned Queen's Regulations:—"A Commanding-officer is not authorised to place on the married roll, without special permission from the General officer Commanding-in-Chief, any N.C.O. or soldier who marries without leave before enlistment."

As a man, on his enlistment, usually carefully omits to state that he happens to be married (as the admission of this would prevent his enlistment, except under very special circumstances), this regulation seldom stands much in his way. Men who marry without leave are, in theory, debarred from ever being placed "on the strength." Thus, the effect is simply to put at a discount the reporting of their marriage to the authorities; so that, when they otherwise fulfil the necessary conditions, they may take their place on the married roll.

Again, a man who has married without leave, although he has committed no offence for which he can be punished, is, in order to discourage the practice, supposed to be

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

strictly regarded as a single soldier. Yet this ruling is, for the benefit of such, frequently ignored. In the same way the regulations which lay down that in *special cases*, where a soldier, married without leave, has any children, the Commanding-officer may grant permission to the man to be "out of Mess" (*i.e.*, to draw his rations separately, and share them with his family), are seldom observed to the letter. As a matter of fact, this indulgence is granted almost wholesale. The wives, too, are occasionally permitted to undertake a portion of the regimental washing, and permission to sleep out of barracks is freely granted to the husbands. I have even known of passages on troopships and transports in several instances being granted to their families.

Although this unauthorised embarkation of such women and children for foreign stations is forbidden, the regulation is by no means strictly carried out. The capacity of a transport, like the oil in the widow's cruse, is never, apparently, exhausted, and a little interest exerted by the Colonel's wife goes a long way in securing these extra passages. An opportunity for the conveyance of a limited number is occasioned by the entering of them as "servants to officers' wives."

Of course only a comparatively very small number of such women can be embarked, and preference is invariably given to those who are "without encumbrances," as it is euphemistically put. But this is a condition which it is often rather hard to find existing. The average Englishman is usually blessed with abundance of offspring, and the married soldier, either "on" or "off" the "strength," is seldom conspicuous for the limited number of his family. The crowds of children who are to be met with in the married quarters of every garrison testify abundantly to his wealth in this respect.

Concerning this matter, officers of Continental armies have frequently expressed much wonder at our system of tolerating the presence in barracks of the natural consequences of a soldier's union. "What a lot of women and

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

children," once remarked a distinguished French General who was visiting an Infantry battalion at Aldershot. "They can't fight—what's the object of letting them live in barracks, then?" A paternal Government, however, has decided otherwise. Accordingly, the "Married Establishment" is a feature of the British regimental system.

When a battalion merely changes quarters from one station to another, the wives and families of such men can generally follow them at the same time. But it is when embarkations for foreign service are taking place that the real distress occurs.

It is a pitiful sight at such times to witness the number of unfortunate women—many of them little more than young girls—with babies at their breasts, standing on the dock quays and weeping bitterly as the ship that bears away the bread-winners and fathers fades from view. Flags are flying bravely, and the crowd cheer enthusiastically and wave their handkerchiefs in adieu. The band plays cheerfully a last farewell, but the music serves only to add to the women's grief, and the joyous shouts of the careless spectators mock them cruelly.

In connection with this the following extract from a newspaper is of interest. The article is descriptive of the condition of affairs in a certain garrison on the departure therefrom of a Highland battalion :

"During these four years so assiduous was the wooing of the 'Kilties,' and so free was the surrender of the maids, that over 400 marriages are reported to have taken place in the ranks of the — (a battalion embarking for Malta). Of the 400, about 150 of the married men—including, I presume, a proportion of those married "with leave"—were discharged before the regiment sailed. That left 250 men, out of the 650 who embarked, burdened with wives; or, to put it, perhaps, the other and truer way, 250 wives, burdened with husbands who could at best afford only a miserable pittance towards them and their children's support."

Of these 250 women, 41 (*i.e.*, 4 per cent.) were "on the strength." What provision under the circumstances could the husbands make for the support of the

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

remainder? The most economically minded Highlander cannot possibly spare more than a few pence daily from his scanty pay. True his wife, even if she is "off the strength," can claim a deduction therefrom of threepence per diem; but how far will 7s. 6d. a month go to feed, clothe, and educate herself and children? Of course, she earns what she can, by sewing and laundry work, or domestic service, but it is at best a constant and bitter struggle for existence. It certainly seems peculiar that such improvident marriages with the unfortunate results that they so often entail are actually encouraged by many Army chaplains, on the plea of their "lessening vice." One would be inclined to think that here the remedy is almost worse than the disease.

By dint of months and years of patient self-denial, and the careful hoarding of every hardly-earned halfpenny, they are sometimes enabled, after long periods of weary waiting, to join their husbands. Even when this has been accomplished they have to wait, as best they can, for the time until such vacancies on the married roll occur as to enable them to be placed on "the establishment." But in granting them this privilege a Commanding-officer is, even with the best intentions in the world, almost exceeding his duty. This is by reason of the fact that soldiers who marry without leave are supposed to have forfeited all claims to at any subsequent period be placed "on the strength."

Once they succeed in getting out to the battalion their position is certainly somewhat improved, as English women in foreign stations can almost always obtain employment as sempstresses or nurses, &c.

Under certain conditions, and in the absence of any suitable civilian hospital, for instance, a woman who is "off the strength" may be admitted to the women's wards of a military hospital. When a soldier's wife is thus admitted the husband's pay is subjected to a deduction of a shilling a day, and to an additional sixpence for each child who may also be admitted. All this makes a

MARRIED LIFE IN THE ARMY

decided hole in a private's income, and it is a matter to be thankful for that soldier's families generally enjoy good health, otherwise the husband's income would rapidly diminish to a vanishing-point altogether.

In accordance with the Biblical maxim that "the husband is the head of his wife," any misdeeds committed by her or her children are visited on the father, who is held strictly responsible for the conduct of his family. In cases of serious misbehaviour on the part of a soldier's wife the regimental authorities resort to the drastic measure of striking the husband off the "married strength," and if he is unable to support her send the woman with her family to her own home, deducting three-pence per diem from the husband's pay for their support. To the credit of the soldier's wife as a class, this sort of thing is of very rare occurrence.

The lot of the widowed and the fatherless is always a hard one, and the position of a soldier's wife whose husband has died while serving is often one of great distress. His pay has seldom enabled him to make any provision for his family, and beyond the arrears owing to him at his death his widow can have but little with which to support her family. Her expenses to her home are generally paid for her by the battalion, which usually has a special fund that may be utilised for such purposes, and she also receives as next-of-kin her husband's "deferred pay," or such "gratuity" as he may have been entitled to.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding all the hardships entailed by the position of being married "off strength," such unions show no apparent signs of decrease. The soldier's wife on her marriage is often so young that she does not really understand the natural conditions accruing to such ill-advised partnerships, and cannot perhaps be expected to very clearly discriminate between the niceties of "on" and "off" the "married strength." It is often the husband himself who has induced her to take this step by his specious promises as to the ease with which he will

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

gain official sanction and be placed "on the establishment." The woman can then hardly be blamed for her ignorance in this respect. Even when the awakening comes, she bravely and, to her credit, makes the best of it, and endures with a praiseworthy and silent heroism, difficulties and trials which would well-nigh appal her more refined sisters.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A REGIMENT OF GENTLEMEN

I HAVE frequently been asked whether I consider the often-mooted idea of forming a regiment, or even a single battalion, whose ranks are to be composed entirely of gentlemen, to be one that is worth putting into practice. From my own experience of the exigencies of the Service I cannot say that I really consider that such a Corps would be efficient in the military sense of the word, and am accordingly of opinion that the proposition is scarcely a feasible one.

It is, moreover, an idea that, whatever advantage it may possess in the eyes of its advocates, does certainly not include that of any pronounced novelty. Since service in the ranks in these hard times, when death dues and School Board rates have assumed such alarming proportions, has well-nigh become a recognised career for the younger sons of the peer and the peasant alike, this suggestion has been periodically introduced by certain more or less well-intentioned cranks. Yet the opinions of those who best know what the needs of the Service are have ever been against such a proposal.

Nevertheless there are, in the language of the "Drill Book," "points to be observed" both for and against the project. In considering the *pros* it has been urged (and with a considerable amount of truth) that under the existing state of affairs it is rather a lottery whether a

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

gentleman who commences his military career at the lowest rung of the ladder finds himself in a battalion with others of his kind, or, on the other hand, stands alone in this respect. On account of the obvious comparison which he must, in this latter case, institute between himself and his comrades-in-arms I consider that this would be rather in the light of an advantage to him. When there is an appreciable number of gentlemen in any particular regiment it naturally becomes much more difficult for each to individually make himself of note. Still, "all is not gold that glitters," and while, among the thousands of soldiers with whom I personally came into contact during my own career in the ranks, there was a fair sprinkling of gentlemen, I must confess that not a few of those who were introduced to me by their admirers as "real gentlemen" struck me as being more fitted for the classification of "gents."

If a gentleman joins the Cavalry he is not likely to find himself so entirely cut off from men of his own class as would be the case in other branches of the Service. Indeed, of some Cavalry Corps it is rumoured that the ranks thereof contain enough gentlemen to form distinct squadrons. It is, moreover, even hinted that in one crack Lancer regiment only bloated aristocrats of the bluest blood and most ancient lineage can gain admittance to certain of its troops. My own experience of the Service leads me to suppose that such a state of affairs as would here seem to be indicated is extremely mythical, and exists only in the fertile imagination of lady "military" novelists.

Although, as the bard has said, "we take him from the city or the plough," there are, nevertheless, other sources of supply than those thus comprehensively indicated. Those bugbears of the rising generation—the Civil Service Commissioners, to wit—are chiefly responsible for the ever-increasing influx of the Gentleman Ranker. Many of those have tried their level best to obtain their commissions through the recognised channels, but have, unfortunately, been unable to meet with success.

A REGIMENT OF GENTLEMEN

The last state of these embryo Wellingtons is then decidedly worse than the first. What is there then for them to do? The untoward rebuff has served but to make them keener than ever on the profession of arms. As it is evident that they cannot serve as officers, many of them make up their minds to do as so many others have done, and enlist in the ranks, where—

“ They don’t care two potatoes for Solons or Platos,
But like great strapping dunces that stand six foot high! ”

Only it by no means follows that they need be dunces, and fortunately the authorities do not, save in two or three instances only, insist on such a standard of physical development.

If those who enlist do so with the idea that they are to have a particularly good time of it, or that they are embarking on a career chiefly marked by high pay and light work, it is more than probable that subsequent events will very speedily convince them of the error of such misguided notions. If, on the other hand, they are wise enough to make up their minds to take the rough with the smooth, and to put up with all the little (and sometimes great) unpleasantnesses of life, they will, after a time (and especially when they will have gained their stripes) find that things go easily enough. Although at no time is this sort of thing “all lavender,” yet worse things happen at sea, and the life is, in many ways, preferable to that which is the common lot of many a well born and bred young fellow in the Colonies. After all, “soldiering” is gentlemen’s work, and the private even is serving his Queen and country just as are his Colonel or the Commander-in-Chief himself.

Some youth, possessed of even more than the average amount of conceit meted out to the ordinary Cavalry Subaltern, has placed on record his opinion that “Cavalry were designed by an intelligent Providence as a means of preventing Infantry from degenerating into a disorganised rabble.” This is the tone adopted by a mis-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

guided few of those very superior young gentlemen who have condescended to honour the ranks with their august presence. It is not likely that such as these should find the life a bed of roses, and their room is always greatly preferable to their company. They do an immense amount of harm by their non-amenability to discipline, and often get the genuine hard-working Ranker a bad name. "Oh, another of those confounded Gentlemen soldiers," remarks the irate C.O. when the prospect of showing them favour is broached. "I wouldn't have 'em at any price—they're more trouble than they're worth. Tell them that they can go to blazes, if they like, as long as they keep out of my battalion!"

Now, supposing that statistics on the subject showed that the number of gentlemen serving in the ranks was sufficient to form a separate battalion (at least 850 would be required), what good purpose would such a battalion, if it were formed, conceivably serve? Obviously it would be impossible for all its members to obtain commissions, or even promotion to the non-commissioned ranks, as the establishment of N.C.O.s (including even those occupying the humble position of Lance-corporal) is only a little over 100 in each battalion.

What an invidious position, too, would be that of "the Gentlemen's Regiment"! Their action in forming themselves into a distinct battalion would be so strongly resented by the less-distinguished members of other Corps as to virtually keep them apart from the remainder of the Army. The fierce light that is popularly supposed to beat upon a throne would surely be extended to their every action, and not always to their advantage. When the novelty had worn off a little the numbers would be pretty certain to go down, and it is unlikely that the subsequent supply would satisfy the demand. The admiration of one's sisters, wives, and cousins, and the envy of the ineligible among one's male relatives, would at first doubtless be very gratifying, but the stern realities of sentry-go, field-days, and drill—from cock-crow to night-

A REGIMENT OF GENTLEMEN

fall—would soon proclaim themselves as more of a nuisance than anything else, and thus cause the attractions of such a career to wane. The rigorous discipline, too, that is such a feature of the Army would be a great factor in dulling the lustre of a life of this description.

The proposition is altogether quite unfeasible, and savours strongly of a conceit that is akin to the worst form of snobbery. If the ordinary common or garden Ranker is not good enough for these would-be recruits to associate with, the presence of these latter in the ranks is conducive to no good purpose at all. Rather the reverse is really the case. The barrack-room is undoubtedly a rough school, but it is a thorough one, and lessons of self-control and self-reliance are to be learned there which will everywhere prove invaluable. In more than one quarter of the globe the private soldier has over and over again proved himself "one of the best," and is doubtless ready, when occasion demands it, to do so again.

If one expects to find Chesterfields in the barrack-room one is likely to be considerably disappointed. In Mr. Kipling's verse is laid down the maxim that "single men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints," and this is but a mild way of stating the case. The private soldier, as a rule, has no particular manners, his conversation is usually quite unprintable, and his customs are often entirely the reverse of those of the upper ten thousand. As of brown sugar, it may be said of them, they are sweet, "but unrefined."

As the Army is at present constituted, the "Regiment of Gentlemen" seems to be a dream of the future. Whether it will ever be one to be fulfilled must be left to the authorities to decide. I cannot think that such a Corps would really be found to answer to either the expectations of its well-wishers or of the men composing its ranks. At present the time seems scarcely ripe for the carrying into effect of such a project.

CHAPTER XL

THE TIME-EXPIRED MEN

AT the commencement of the following spring we completed two years' service in Malta, and consequently began to speculate as to the locality of our next station. It had been freely stated, on the authority of a Lance-corporal, who, being employed in the Brigade Office, was invested with a spurious reputation for knowing everything, that we were to move either to Hong Kong or else to Allahabad.

I had no great ambition to go to China, but I was anxious to experience a little of "soldiering" in India. If our new station was to be in this country I had determined to accompany the battalion there, although, in order to do so, I should be obliged, owing to the fast approaching completion of my term of service "with the colours," to extend the same for a further period of five years. Private affairs had, however, for some time past been making me seriously think of leaving the Army altogether.

I could, of course, if I had so chosen, have returned to England and gone "on the Reserve." But this course did not commend itself to me for many reasons. On completing seven, or, if abroad at the time, eight years' service, a man is sent back to England (should he decline to extend his service for five more years) to join the Reserve. During the period that he belongs to this force

THE TIME-EXPIRED MEN

he receives a retaining fee of sixpence a day. In return, he undertakes to present himself for about ten days' instruction in drill, &c., every year, for which purpose he is temporarily attached to a battalion quartered in his neighbourhood. In addition to this he must in time of war or of "grave national emergency" rejoin his original battalion when the Reserves are called out. This does not happen often, but it occurred in the early Soudan campaigns.

The necessity of performing the annual training and the constant reporting of oneself—savouring strongly of the ticket-of-leave system—at stated intervals render it difficult for a Reservist to undertake many forms of civilian employment. Although a soldier may purchase his discharge from the Reserve, I preferred to avoid the joining of this force by procuring my discharge (and at precisely the same cost) while serving with my own battalion.

While I was debating the question and consulting a good many people as to the wisdom of the course that I proposed taking, the information came, duly authorised by instructions from the War Office, that we were to embark for Aden in the following November.

The effect of this intelligence was like a thunderclap; for, though there are many unhealthy and unpleasant stations in India, as there are in the Colonies, there is none in any portion of the globe where British troops are quartered that is so utterly abhorred and loathed as in that sun-blistered arid portion of the British Empire known as Aden.

When the news had been confirmed, and its truth no longer admitted of any doubt, I inquired whether I should be required to accompany the battalion to its new station, or if I should instead be sent to the Reserve? In reply I was officially informed that this latter would be my fate, and accordingly I then put in an application to be permitted to procure my discharge from the Army by purchase.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

After a little delay this was granted, and in return a demand for the sum of £18 "purchase-money" was made me. When this had been paid and the regimental authorities had been satisfied that I was prepared to meet the cost of my journey to England rather than again experience the delights of a passage in a troopship, my discharge-papers were handed to me and I was a free man. Thus was occasioned the closing scene of nearly seven eventful years.

Very little appears to be known by the general public as to the nature of the Army Reserve or as to the conditions under which men belonging to this force are during such period affected.

The truth is the Army Reserve, like so many other things in this world, is in theory admirable, but in practice hardly a pronounced success. A scheme which insures its country in its hour of need a reserve force of many thousands of highly trained and disciplined men in the prime of life is one which, were it but capable of being applied, would make the English Army a model for those of Europe. Unfortunately for its promoters, the idea, for reasons which are so many and so varied that it is not feasible to enter upon them here at any length, has not been developed in such a way that it can be considered as unqualifiedly successful in the result. The Reserve, on which we have so greatly prided ourselves, and the establishment of which has occasioned so vast an expenditure of time and money, has been responsible for a great and ever-increasing problem, the satisfactory solution of which still seems as far off as ever.

This is the problem of the Time-expired man.

By hundreds weekly, and by thousands annually, young men, averaging in age about twenty-five years, are discharged from the Army to that state in civil life which they were occupying previous to their enlistment. If an equal number of young men, and all of them equally

THE TIME-EXPIRED MEN

suitable in other respects, would at the same time leave civil life and join the ranks, those thus discharged therefrom could take their place. Under these circumstances the whole operation would then devolve into one of simple giving and taking.

This, however, is not what happens at all.

Let it be granted that in some years the number of men enlisted has exceeded those lost to the Army by death, desertion, or as invalids, or by discharges, by purchase on completion of their "first period of service with the colours," or misconduct. There are other ways besides those here enumerated by which soldiers become non-effective, but it is unnecessary to enter into them in detail. It is only those of the largest class discharged on completion of seven years' service "with the colours" that join the Reserve at all. In 1898 the total of such was 16,189.

No one, however sanguine an advocate of this force, can seriously maintain that the number who annually leave their battalions for the Reserve are balanced by those who enlist in their places. The two classes of men must be considered before a correct estimate of the *net* difference can be arrived at. A volunteer, we all know, is worth three pressed men, and all the men in the ranks of the Army have joined voluntarily. But surely a man of five or six and twenty who has been carefully disciplined and trained in military habits for seven years, his physique improved by drill and gymnastics, and his natural abilities increased by constant instruction in shooting, fencing, riding, &c., and who has (if he has been an N.C.O.) received the benefit of a good elementary education, is worth at least half a dozen of the undeveloped, half-grown, and awkward recruits who present themselves for enlistment in his place?

As the "conditions of service" which at present apply to the rank and file may not be generally known, I will state them here. Except in special cases (and chiefly in Departmental Corps) a recruit is enlisted at any age

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

between 18 and 25* that he is successful in convincing the doctor to be properly his. An enormous percentage join at a good deal under 17 years of age. Mere boys, many to all appearance not a day over 16, at the very earliest opportunity present themselves as candidates, and if they can satisfy the examining medical officers that they are not under 18 years of age are straightway enlisted as "men." Before these striplings are of the slightest use to their country months of careful training, during which a considerable expenditure in rations, clothing, and pay will have been involved, are entailed.

For general purposes it will be sufficient to state that the term of enlistment is for seven years "with the Colours" (that is, with a battalion of Regulars). On completion of this, five years are spent in the peaceful seclusion of the Reserve. Should a man complete his "colour" service while he is stationed abroad he will most probably be detained for an extra year, or until an opportunity of sending him home in a troopship or transport occurs. Such extra periods of "colour" service decrease a proportionate amount of his subsequent service in the Reserve.

While in this force a Reservist undergoes annually a few days' instruction in drill and rifle exercise. For this purpose he is attached for the necessary period to a battalion of Regulars. The object of this training is to keep up his military knowledge and to prevent him becoming too rusty at drill, &c. During the time that a soldier is in the Reserve he receives, as a retaining fee for the service which in case of emergency he must be prepared to give, the sum of sixpence per day. This amount is paid quarterly, but when a Reservist is required to rejoin the Colours he receives regimental pay instead. This calling up of the Reserve, or a portion thereof, in the event of active service requiring them, and sending them

* Candidates are now accepted at seventeen years of age, provided their physical development shows signs of subsequently reaching the authorised standard.

THE TIME-EXPIRED MEN

to join battalions in the field, is an eventuality that seldom occurs. Still it is really the *raison d'être* of the force. It is for this reason that a "Special Reserve" has lately been organised. This consists of 5,000 men, who for the space of one year undertake an increased liability to proceed on active service. Whilst belonging to this class of the Reserve they receive one shilling per diem.

CHAPTER XLI

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

A MAN cannot very well spend, as I did, a number of years of his life in the ranks of the Army, keeping his eyes open (for neither N.C.O.s nor men can go about half asleep), without observing many points in connection with the soldier's life which are capable of improvement. As such matters came under my observation I used to jot down brief notes of what my own ideas on these subjects were, and it is to some of these that I propose to devote this concluding chapter.

"Feed an Army well, and you can get them to do anything," has been laid down as a military axiom, and I am convinced it is a sound one. Our own Army is probably the best-fed one of any, but, at the same time, a far better result might be obtained if more care were applied to the treatment of the rations. Although during the last few years the food has certainly improved, and is undoubtedly better and more plentiful than that to which the majority of the troops have been accustomed before the "Cook-house bugle" first gladdened their ears, it is not as satisfactory as it might very well be. Nor is it really sufficient in quantity.

Concerning this subject I was greatly struck by a couple of magazine articles, published now some little time ago, on the conditions of the life of the soldier of to-day. In the former of them, written by an officer, well

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

known for the interest that he takes in this subject occurs this passage :

"During the last six years especially barrack feeding has made brilliant strides. Dishes of meat are supplied for breakfast ; roasts, stews, curries, puddings, and pies for dinner ; and even the despised tea meal is generally supplemented by some appetising article of diet—in fact, the former sordid and insufficient repasts have been replaced, not only by an abundance, but by such variety of savoury food that the soldier who still complains of hunger must be either a fool or a glutton."

Contrast this with the remarks, published at the same period, of a well-known officer of the Army Medical Staff:

"I consider the soldiers' rations, more especially the meat, is not nearly enough for a growing lad. Much more so is this the case when the lad is already suffering from the effects of defective nutrition. If in this case there be added the increased waste resulting from his training, the meat ration, which is only 12 oz. daily, is not sufficient, even if it were all 'prime cut' ; but what is the case ? When allowance is made for bone and for loss in cooking, the meat when cooked does not weigh more than from 7 to 8 oz., indigestible material being left out of consideration. Besides, the rations are not sufficiently varied, and though much has been done in recent years to improve the cooking, it too falls short of extracting from the food its fully nutritive value."

The word "repast," as used by the first writer, in connection with a soldier's meal is distinctly poetical. Certainly an improvement has of late taken place in the rations, but there was and still is a considerable amount of room for it. The daily allowance of food remains the same as it has been for a great many years, and the days on which the dishes of meat, roasts, stews, curries, and puddings and pies that are so glowingly referred to make their appearance in the barrack-room are few and far between. The expression "dishes of meat," too, usually

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

resolves itself into a few samples of leathery, india-rubber like pieces of beef which have been cut off the joints destined for dinner. Again, the amount which falls to each man's share is but the merest scrap. The daily meat ration is too small to admit of sufficient being deducted therefrom to make a good meal at breakfast time, and there is no other source of supply.

Dinner is a soldier's chief meal, but the generous menu of "roasts, stews, curries, puddings, and pies" is neither so appetising in quality nor plentiful in quantity as one could wish. The preparation thereof is also far from satisfactory; and for this there are many causes. In the first place, with the exception of the master-cook (a Sergeant), who has received a special training at Aldershot, men are taken into the regimental cook-houses without the slightest aptitude for the work. An Englishman even with careful instruction seldom develops into a good cook, much less then do the men who are taken haphazardly from the ranks and pitchforked into a kitchen. These men have seldom the slightest knowledge of their work, although they are generally extremely full of ideas on the subject.

In an article on Army rations and their preparation, a writer who has been behind the scenes very pertinently remarks :

"Even if he [the master-cook] is a conscientious man . . . he cannot teach a saddler, carpenter, or labourer to become a cook (common garden or any other sort) in five minutes. The only way is to enlist men as cooks, and give them special pay and rating as such, after passing a proper examination, like artificers."

Again, the cook-houses are so crowded, and the appliances for working so unsatisfactory, that it is almost impossible to produce good results. The Sergeant-cooks complain that, owing to the inadequate supply of coal, they cannot always ensure the meat being properly roasted.

In order to give as much variety as possible, each mess

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

has its meat baked, stewed, boiled, or curried on alternate mornings. At twenty minutes to one every day the dishes are taken from the ovens and placed in rows on the stone floor. They are then inspected by the Orderly-officer, who is apparently considered to be qualified to pass a professional opinion upon their condition. When this has been done they are carried by the Orderly-men to the various barrack-rooms. All this takes a certain amount of time, and, as some of the rooms in large barracks are at a considerable distance from the cook-house, it happens consequently that the dishes, which are uncovered ones, have to be carried in the open air (occasionally in wet weather) to their destination. Naturally this does not tend to improve their contents. When these have been cut up and distributed it is one o'clock, and at least twenty minutes have elapsed since the joints were taken from the cooking-ranges. They are then anything but "savoury and appetising." Soup, made by utilising bones and the odds and ends of meat and vegetables that are too-readily consigned to the refuse-contractor's swill-tub, is frequently supplied; but it is not popular, chiefly because it entails the employment of extra basins, and barrack-rooms are always short of crockery. Another reason for its unpopularity is that the class of men from which the ranks are chiefly recruited have not been accustomed to soup, and for that reason entertain a silly prejudice against it. Occasionally (but seldom more often than on Sundays) a pudding of some sort is provided; this, if it is not "plum duff," is either rice or sago. Abroad, where it is both plentiful and cheap, fruit is often procured in addition.

Although the tea-bugle sounds daily at 4 P.M. there is no recognised meal at this hour. A pint of tea per man is prepared in the cook-houses, and this, with such bread as may be left over from breakfast, is all that the men have with which to stay their lusty appetites until breakfast the next morning. The interval is rather a long one, accordingly a soldier may perhaps be excused if during it

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

he should so far forget himself as to grow hungry. At any rate, he might be spared being summarily written down "either a fool or a glutton." That the men do get hungry and want something in the way of supper is abundantly proved by the immense amount of business done in the evenings by the regimental coffee-shops.

The next point on which I shall touch is that of the soldier's financial prospects. In the article to which I have referred with respect to rations is this passage :

"A slight increase in the soldier's pay, together with the abolition of deduction for the meat ration and the free issue of many articles of kit, have combined to place at his disposal an amount of pocket-money which many a gentleman's schoolboy son would think liberal and every labourer would consider luxurious."

If this referred only to the higher ranks of N.C.O.s it would be fairly true as far as it goes, but with Non-commissioned officers of the junior grades, and also with privates, it is hardly the case. Besides, many men have others dependent on them, and to these the prospect of an amount of pocket-money "considered liberal by gentlemen's schoolboy sons," and even "luxurious by labourers," is scarcely enticing. They are men who work hard at times and in responsible positions, and naturally they do not care to receive in payment the pocket-money of school-boys.

By paying Non-commissioned officers at considerably higher rates than they at present receive the authorities would attract a very much better class of men to the ranks. As it is, I suppose a recruit's enlistment is, six times out of ten, his last resource instead of his first aim. As the competition for appointment to the rank of N.C.O. would, if the position of such were substantially increased, be very much greater, a higher standard of capacity for such rank might then be very well insisted upon.

As the prospect of promotion is one that very greatly concerns all those who wish to earn distinction in this manner, the regulations concerning this subject require

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

some attention. As matters now stand, it is very much of a lottery whether a man will ever be a Non-commissioned officer or not. Promotion to these ranks is not competitive, nor is it altogether qualifying—in fact, no one can really say on what particular system it does happen to be based. If only a limited amount of competition were made necessary for all ranks above that of Corporal the results would, I think, be beneficial. At any rate, such an arrangement would give a man who had, by dint of hard work, endeavoured to qualify himself for promotion an advantage over another who is contented to merely master sufficient drill, &c., to hold his position. Again, a greater element of selection might well be introduced ; at present too much weight is given to seniority alone.

Nevertheless the principle of selection should not be unduly pressed, for, although a man may be simply bristling with certificates, he may still be unsuitable for many reasons to receive advancement to the higher ranks. Then a man who is continually being passed over—for inefficiency perhaps—loses heart, and does not even try to improve himself. Of course, if he is inefficient he should not be a Non-commissioned officer at all, and that he is so does not reflect much credit on the discernment of the officer who gave him his first promotion. Still, do what he can to keep up a good standard, a Commanding-officer is hardly to blame—as he has to trust solely to the recommendations of others—if some rather unsuitable men do occasionally manage to get into the ranks of the N.C.O.s. To overcome this as far as possible selection for the higher grades is sometimes resorted to.

The necessary periods, too, that elapse before promotion to certain ranks can be gained differ considerably in various Corps. Two men may enlist together in different battalions, and each get his first promotion (that of Lance-corporal) on the same day. In eighteen months, one of them may be a Sergeant, while the other, after seven years, is still a Corporal. Those who do not

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

understand how such things are arranged may at first be under the very natural impression that the former of these two is a man of exceptional ability, or else has been unduly favoured, while the other has not proved himself sufficiently intelligent to merit higher advancement.

Neither of these assumptions is necessarily correct. The fact is, in one battalion the flow of promotion may be particularly rapid, while in another it is abnormally slow. I have known men to become Sergeants in less than a couple of years, while it has taken others in less favourably situated battalions more than four times that period to attain the same rank. Promotion, we know, comes neither from the east nor from the west, and it is accelerated and retarded by a variety of circumstances. It is hastened chiefly by the vacancies that are occasioned in the various ranks by the transfer to the Reserve, or departure as "time-expired," of N.C.O.s. The greater the number that thus become "non-effective," the greater will be the amount of promotion to be filled up by the remaining N.C.O.s.

Owing to the continued depletion of the establishment of the foreign service battalion by sickness, completion of service, and transfer to the Reserve, &c. of large numbers of N.C.O.s and men, drafts have to be constantly sent out from home to take their place. It is impossible to send parties of men on long journeys by rail and sea without any one to look after them. Consequently, a proportion of N.C.O.s has to accompany these drafts. On their arrival in India, or Africa, or wherever it may be, they are taken on the strength of the new battalion and absorb the vacancies of their rank that may exist. This is very hard on those N.C.O.s who have borne the heat and burden of the day for many years, and then find themselves, by being thus supplanted by fresh arrivals (many of them with far less total service as soldiers than they have), continually going further *down* the roll.

After I had worn my Corporal's stripes for ten months

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

I found myself (on account of the departure of several of my seniors) twenty-six places from the top of the roll of that rank; seven months later the place that I occupied was the thirty-third. This sort of thing was rather in the nature of an "Irishman's rise," and was not distinctly encouraging. In one draft alone, that joined us in Gibraltar, there were three Sergeants and five Corporals, all of whom were, by date of their promotion to "effective rank," senior to me. Nevertheless I had nine months more service than the oldest soldier of any of them, while the junior was a stripling of nineteen, who had enlisted only fifteen months previously.

While this system prevails, one never really knows how one stands. For instance, an N.C.O. may be a place or two from the top of the roll of his rank, and expecting promotion to a higher step; three months afterwards the posting of half a dozen seniors from the home battalion causes him to be as many places *lower* down.

If only it were arranged that the whole of the N.C.O.s in the two battalions of a regiment should be placed on one roll, and that the vacancies that from time to time exist in either be filled up by the seniors on this roll, or even those specially selected, promotion would be more equalised. This is the manner in which it is arranged in the Commissioned ranks, and the same system might be adapted in part to the requirements of the Non-commissioned grades.

Once more, if only the vacancies that are created in home-stationed battalions by the constant transferring of N.C.O.s who accompany drafts to those stationed abroad were filled up by N.C.O.s from the foreign service battalions, the rate of promotion in each would be fairly equal. But this is not the case at all. Certainly Non-commissioned officers are, at times, sent from the foreign service to the home battalion of their regiment, but not in anything like the same proportion. When N.C.O.s go to battalions abroad the greater part of the vacancies that they create by their departure are filled up at home. Men

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

are on the spot, ready to step into their shoes, and their services are accordingly made use of.

For these reasons chiefly promotion is almost invariably much faster in battalions stationed in the United Kingdom than it is in those serving in places "beyond the seas." The difficulty in equalising it is due to the great expense that would be involved in transferring small parties of N.C.O.s by themselves from stations abroad to England. Occasionally a Colour-sergeant or Sergeant may be sent home in a troopship to take up one of the higher appointments, but this happens very rarely, comparatively speaking.

The factor which chiefly militates against the popularising of the Army as a career for greater numbers of men of the right stamp is undoubtedly the difficulty that exists of their obtaining suitable employment on leaving the ranks. Ours is, I believe, almost the only army which declines to *guarantee* remunerative employment to all its soldiers who have served it faithfully. True the Government do what they can, in the way of throwing open to Army Reserve men a proportion of the appointments at their disposal as postmen, messengers, prison warders, policemen, and workmen in the ordnance factories, &c., but there is no *certainty* of a man's obtaining such posts. And this *certainty* is what is wanted.

No one can contend that a Reservist can live (even in plainest manner) on sixpence a day; and his pay as a Reservist is not issued to him for this purpose. It is not intended as a "living wage," and it is, therefore, obviously necessary that he should supplement this private income by some more remunerative employment.

Here, however, is precisely where the difficulty comes in.

During the time that he has been serving his country, his place in the ranks of civil life has been taken by those with whom he formerly worked side by side. When he leaves the Army for the peaceful pursuits of the Reserve, he naturally finds that the vacancy he created on his

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

enlistment has been filled up. He is rather old, at twenty-six, to start in life, especially as an untrained man. Employers, when they [can find any number of men five or six years younger than this, and who possess some years' experience of their work, are only acting in their own interests—selfish as these interests are—in employing such in preference to fresh hands. That these latter are willing to learn does not avail them much, for no one seems to have time to teach them. Still, the policy of the employers is an eminently selfish one; for, while the ex-soldier has been serving the best interests of these very capitalists—on occasions at the risk of his own life, and almost always to the detriment of his health and future prospects, and amid difficulties and dangers little dreamed of by civilians—the artisan and labourer to whom the preference is given have thereby been enabled to remain snugly at home.

The unfortunate recruit soon finds out that during his absence he has dropped out of the run. His deferred pay,* amounting to £21, which carefully expended might have served to tide over the weary period of waiting until something should present itself, is too often rapidly converted into liquor at the nearest public-house. After vainly trying to get work, when his money has dwindled away (and his readily-made friends in company with it), he finds himself at last drifting no one knows where.

In an article commenting on this unfortunate state of affairs, a Service journal once made some very pertinent remarks. As they still hold good, an extract therefrom might very well be here inserted :

“ What we need in our home Army is to have in the ranks soldiers who are men capable of bearing arms as soon as they have learned how to use them; and in our Army abroad soldiers who have thoroughly learned their work, and who are enabled to do it properly without being incapacitated from preventible causes. The first desideratum is to get the men, and not only men, but the right sort of men. This latter is the chief difficulty. The right sort of men are

* Replaced, in the case of soldiers enlisted after 1897, by a gratuity of £7.

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

those who are able by reason of their good qualities to earn their living in civil life. Many of these—thousands in fact—would be glad to do a few years' soldiering were it not that hereafter they find it less easy to obtain the class of employment which their qualities entitle them to expect. At present an artisan, earning, say, 30s. per week, will not leave his employment in order to enlist, even if his soldier's pay were at the same rate, for he knows that during his Army service his hand would forget its cunning, and that if employed at all on reversion to civil life, he must be content with a far lower scale of wages. Men of this class, therefore, decline to serve.

What we should do in order to obtain the better class of recruits in sufficient numbers is, in the first place, to decline to enlist any men who cannot obtain satisfactory characters from reliable persons, as well as certificates of birth, so as to verify their actual ages on enlistment; and, in the second place, we should prosecute any person who insults a soldier because he is a soldier. Having thus set our house in order by accepting only desirable recruits, and ensuring that after enlistment they shall never have cause to feel ashamed of their calling, we should offer to those who serve faithfully and well a reasonable guarantee that when they complete their Army engagements the State will find them situations suitable to their capacities. In short only men with good characters should be enlisted, and all soldiers who obtain 'very good' characters on discharge should go straight from the ranks to their situations."

Unfortunately, the difficulties in the way of achieving this desirable condition of things are almost insuperable. For one thing, the numbers to be provided for enormously increase the task. Were it only a case of providing employment for a few hundreds annually, the question would not present such difficulties; but when it is a total of something like twenty thousand (made up from men transferred to the Reserve, or discharged to pension, &c.) that has to be dealt with every year the problem is a well-nigh appalling one. In the present congested state of the labour market it is extremely doubtful if work could be found for one-half of this number, even if they were perfectly qualified to undertake it; and this is not always the case.

Almost every nature of employment nowadays demands special training and experience; and this, in the direction that it is wanted, the ex-soldier is seldom enabled to offer. For this reason, he is generally at a considerable discount in the labour market. He has enlisted too young to have

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

made any real start in life, and has left the Army too soon to have acquired any knowledge of earning his living as a civilian, save in the capacity of an unskilled labourer. When the soldier beats his bayonet into a ploughshare he seldom makes a conspicuous success of it.

One of the best-known societies for the benefit of ex-service men is the "National Association for the Employment of Reserve and Discharged Soldiers." In the report of one of their late meetings it was stated that out of some 8,000 men who had registered their names as wanting work, situations had been found for about 4,000. This is not a very satisfactory result, nor is it inspiring to learn that, on the authority of a recently issued Parliamentary paper, there were lately no less than 8,887 ex-soldiers either inmates of workhouses or in receipt of parochial relief. At the same period probably twice this number were out of employment, and, consequently, *en route* to the nearest casual ward or the relieving-officer. Because the whole of these men were not carrying their discharge documents in their pockets, the authorities suggest that the claims of such to be regarded as old soldiers were baseless. It is a little difficult to follow this reasoning, for a man has no more object in claiming to be an ex-soldier than he has in stating that he is a member of any other class of the community. Under the circumstances the insult seems gratuitous.

In the Continental Armies the difficulty of providing the ex-soldier with employment does not appear to press so heavily. When every man, as a matter of course, becomes, in his turn, a soldier, he is, to a certain extent, enabled to make preparations for his return to civil life and take over the position of his successor in the ranks. In connection with this it has often been advanced that conscription in England is the panacea for the soldier's troubles. Public opinion, however, is so strongly against it that it is extremely unlikely that it would have the desired effect.

It has been gravely suggested on more than one occa-

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

sion that soldiers should be taught trades during their term of service, and that those who are already tradesmen should be afforded opportunities of practising their particular avocation. At first sight this idea may seem a good one, but it is not really practicable; for if the rank and file were engaged in any great numbers as tailors, shoemakers, saddlers, &c., who then would be left to perform the very necessary duties of sentries, picquets, escorts, &c.? As it is the number of men in every battalion already employed as cooks, waiters, orderlies, officers' servants, grooms, tailors, shoemakers, &c., considerably decrease the totals available for purely military work. Consequently the duty which has to be performed presses the more hardly on these latter. Out of the 14 N.C.O.s and 110 men in my Company alone there were at one time eight N.C.O.s and 27 men "off duty" for these various causes, and this was nothing exceptional. In the eight Companies of a battalion there must be something like 200 of such men. Surely their places might very well have been taken by men belonging to the Reserve? If this were generally the case the problem of finding work for these would be very much lessened. With reference to this subject I might here mention that in the Military Canteens in the United Kingdom alone 700 soldiers are employed in such unsoldierly offices as potmen, waiters, &c.

It is in grasping the substance for the shadow that the Army Reservist so often comes to grief. If he would but emulate the example of the Time-Expired man and qualify (by prolonging his service to twenty-one years) for a pension his bitter cry of non-employment would not be so greatly in evidence. Unhappily, his eagerness to set up for himself on the capital represented by his "deferred pay" or "gratuity" and the possession of a discharge-sheet, possibly marked "exemplary," is frequently the cause of his downfall.

To remedy this state of affairs it is often urged that soldiers should be afforded more encouragement to re-

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

engage, and thus increase the bonus that will eventually come to them. It is also pointed out that if they were more generally permitted to serve for twenty-one years they could then qualify for a pension. But this cuts both ways; for while the effective strength of the Army is being increased that of the Reserve is being proportionately depleted. In fact, it is simply a case of giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

If every man "extended" his service or "re-engaged" to qualify for a pension there would be no Reserve at all, as after twelve years' service the Army has no further claim upon a soldier. Thus it is that the scheme defeats itself. If the strength of the Reserve shows perceptible signs of decreasing its ranks are temporarily inflated by withholding permission to serve for more than seven years "with the Colours." Non-commissioned officers, however, of the rank of Corporal and upwards can as a claim extend their "Colour-service" to twelve years, but privates may only do so with the sanction of their Commanding-officer.

So far from aiding a man on leaving the Army service in the Reserve often actually forms a bar to his prospects of obtaining civilian employment. On account of the few days' annual training that he has to undergo and his remote liability to be "called up" for active service, employers of labour, as a rule, seem to give a decided preference to those who are not affected by these considerations. This is grossly unfair, but to "a nation of shopkeepers" the fact that a man has given several of the best years of his life to protecting the interests of these people (to the detriment of his own) apparently constitutes no claim whatever to consideration. Then also he is debarred (save by the exercise of numerous and irritating formalities) from leaving the country and embarking on a career in the Colonies.

Hard though the lot of the Army Reserve man of the present day often is, it is not to be compared to that of the Time-Expired man of a former generation. At that

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

time he was considerably more advanced in years ; his scanty pay had not sufficed him to make any adequate provision for his old age, and the pensions that were then obtainable were but the merest pittances.

It is a slur on our boasted "patriotism" that so often the workhouse forms the last refuge for the declining days of men who have spent their prime in the service of their country. Surely it is a scandal that a recipient of the V.C. should in his old age be forced to throw himself on the cold charity of "the parish." I read a little time ago of an ex-soldier who as a young man had fought at Sobraon and Moodkee, and afterwards in the Crimea, China, and South Africa. For the last fifteen years of his life he was an inmate of a workhouse, and when he died his winding-sheet was a pauper's shroud. A daily paper, commenting on this, tersely observed, "he was covered with medals and decorations and was buried by 'the parish.'"

Surely to any one who thinks at all about it it must seem that there is something very wrong somewhere, when one takes into consideration the fact that, notwithstanding the advantages, so many and so various, accruing to the position of the soldier of to-day, yet an enormous number of desertions and discharges for misconduct and by purchase take place every year. Here is an extract from the latest return on this subject :

LOST TO THE ARMY IN 1898.			
By Desertion	By Discharge for Misconduct	By Discharge by Purchase	Total
4,107	2,174	1,574	7,855

It is no answer to say that soldiers are always discontented and grumbling. I am convinced it is nothing of

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

the sort. In the opinion of those who know him best, the British Soldier—I hate the term “Tommy Atkins,” it is an impertinence and the expression of the shop-boy—is a man who uncomplainingly endures a far greater amount of hardship and discomfort (often attended by actual danger) than do those who find it so easy to label him “discontented.” Another thing is that the class of men from which the average soldier is drawn is not at all the sort to be discontented with an adequate amount of food, clothing, lodging, and pay. To them, indeed, the scales of such that are so freely advertised in the “General Advantages of the Army” placards must appeal in a peculiarly favourable light.

One would naturally imagine that the very prospect of sufficient food and a roof over his head to the man out of the streets who has not known what it is to be certain of a couple of meals a day for any length of time would be sufficient inducement for him to remain in the Service until the last possible moment. But that it is not so, the annual statistics of the numbers of “non-effectives,” lost to the Army by desertion and discharge, bear painful testimony.

It has always seemed to me a great pity that the Army is not on an equal footing, as regards pay and conditions of service, with the Police Force and Fire Brigade. To be dismissed from either of these is the greatest punishment known to the men. It cannot be said that this is the case with the Army, from which a discharge almost seems to be now regarded in the light of a prize. Of course, it is very regrettable that this should be so, but the remedy lies with the authorities themselves.

It is certainly true that the moral standard of the rank and file of the Army is not of the highest quality, but this is not altogether necessary for its efficiency. The private soldier, as found in the ranks, is no drawing-room flower, and is generally far more at home in the Canteen than in the boudoir. His ever-ready conversational embellishments, too, partake more of the nature of the remote

THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

fastnesses of the tap-room than of those more generally in vogue in polite society. Still there is more than one sort of fish in the sea, and, in the same way, there are men in the ranks who are more than the equals of many of those out of them. But the leaven of such is comparatively small.

When the foolish and vulgar prejudices against the serving of Her Majesty and the wearing of the Queen's uniform have been totally abolished, we may then, perhaps, confidently expect to find the tone of the rank and file considerably improved. At present it too often appears that "the widow's uniform" is, indeed, regarded as "the soldier man's disgrace." This is not as it should be. The tunic of even the private soldier should be considered an honourable distinction.

The old taunt that we are "a nation of shop-keepers" is evidently a more than half-truth. Respectable young fellows of the right stamp are not likely to join the ranks when they are liable to be sneered at and jeered at, and to be made the butt of the very cheap wit of the man in the street. It is, perhaps, futile to expect much improvement in this respect when we consider the light in which so many, otherwise eminently worthy, people regard the soldier. The village boy who "lists" is looked upon by many as being utterly lost and is openly wept over by his disconsolate relatives, while the girl who is seen in the company of a man in a tunic is considered to be on the direct road to perdition.

While more enlightened opinions than these are, happily, in force among the majority, they do not, unfortunately, prevail among all. But let anything arise to demand the soldiers' services, a riot to be quelled, or a brush with the enemy, or (and what touches these "patriots" more than anything) private property to be protected, and then it is a very different case. Nothing is then too good for the soldier, and the man who but yesterday was by the potman deemed an intruder, should he enter the select precincts of a public-house bar is now fawned by the proprietor himself.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

And now there is no more to add and I must accordingly bring these pages to a close. If, in their course, I shall have been able to throw any light on the conditions of service by which the rank and file of the Army are affected my purpose will have been achieved. Concerning the soldier and his lot, it is probable that more wrong impressions prevail than is the case with any other class of the community. Accordingly my efforts to remove a few of the more conspicuous among these must be advanced in excuse for the writing of the foregoing pages.

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Mr. William Heinemann's
Publications and
Announcements

August 1892.

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Index of Authors.

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
About	26	Dudeney	30	Kimball	21	Ricci	4
Alexander	27	Du Toit	11	Kipling	26	Richter	15
Allen	11	Eeden	31	Knight	16	Riddell	23
Allen	30	Ellwanger	16	Kraszewski	29	Rives	23
Anstey	15	Ely	14	Kroeker	18	Roberts (A. von)	29
Arbuthnot	20	Evans	5, 21	Landor	12	Roberts (C. G. D.)	12
Aston	19	Farrar	15	Lawson	5	Robins	7
Atherton	28	Ferruggia	29	Le Caron	7	Robinson	23
Baddeley	9, 18	Fitch	20	Lee (Vernon)	26	Rostand	17
Balestier	23, 25, 28	Fitzmaurice-Kelly	19	Leland	9	Saintsbury	13
Barnett	22	Fitz Patrick	25	Le Querdec	7	Salaman (J. S.)	21
Barrett	28	Fleming	26	Leroy-Bealieu	9	Salaman (M. C.)	16
Battershall	25	Flammariou	21	Lie	29	Sarcey	7
Behrs	8	Forbes	16	Linton	23	Schulz	11
Bellamy	12	Fothergill	28	Locke	25, 30	Scidmore	12
Bendall	28	Franzos	29	Lowe	7, 16	Scudamore	16
Benedetti	10	Frederic	9, 23, 27	Lowry	18	Sedgwick	22
Benham	22	Furtwängler	5	Lutzow (Count)	29	Serao	29
Benson	13	Garmo	20	Lynch	27	Sergeant	24, 27
Beothy	19	Garner	21	Maartens	28	Shaler	21
Beringer	30	Garnett	19	Macdonell	19	Somerset	11
Björnson	29, 31	Gaulot	8	McFall	11	Southey	6
Blunt	18	Glasgow	23	Mackenzie	10	Steel	25
Bowen	20	Golm	29	Macnab	15	Stephen	21
Boyesen	13	Gontcharoff	29	Maeterlinck	27	Steuart	22
Brailsford	22	Gore	21	Malling	22	Stevenson	17, 24, 25
Brandes	13, 19	Gounod	7	Malot	27	Sutcliffe	22
Briscoe	28	Gosse	8, 13, 17, 18, 19, 26	Marey	21	Tadema	30
Brooke	24	Grand	25	Marsh	30	Tallentyre	16
Brown	10	Granville	25	Masson	8	Tasma	27
Brown & Griffiths	21	Gray (Maxwell)	26	Maude	16	Thompson	12
Buchanan	14, 17, 28, 32	Gras	22, 26	Maupassant	29	Thomson	11
Burgess	9	Grard	4	Maurice	16	Thomson (Basil)	26
Byron	3	Griffiths	21	Merriman	16	Thurston	21
Cahan	30	Gruerber	20	Michel	5	Tirebuck	23
Caine (Hall)	10, 24, 27	Guyau	15	Mitford	28	Tolstoy	15, 17, 29
Caine (R.)	18	Hañz	18	Monk	30	Tree	18
Calvert	11	Hall	20	Moore	27	Turgenev	31
Cambridge	27	Hamilton	23, 30	Müller	10	Tyler	19
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